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THE

NORTH-DEVON

SCENERY-BOOK,

BY

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a

GEORGE TUGWELL, M.A., OXON.

ILLUSTRATED BY

H. B. SCOUGALL, M.A., CANTAB.

LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.
ILFRACOMBE:
JOHN BANFIELD.

PREFACE.

THIS book is a pictorial and descriptive guide to the north coast of Devonshire.

For those travellers who require facts only, I have already compiled "THE NORTH DEVON HAND-BOOK" (of which a third edition will shortly be published), which is little else but a classified record of names, things, dates, and distances, and from which I have purposely excluded all verbal descriptions of scenery and all erratic dissertation.

Some people, however, desire to have a fuller notion of the peculiarities of the district through which they are to travel than such a brief summary affords them; and would be glad, for instance, to skim through the note-book of an enquiring and discursive friend who had lately preceeded them in their intended route.

Many more, too, like to carry away with them from such a country as North Devon some more elaborate memorial, the work both of pen and pencil, of the scenes from which they have derived health and pleasure.

For such the present "SCENERY-BOOK" has been published. Its author's and illustrator's profits will be given to a country Church-and-School Building-Fund (see pages 212-13) which is greatly in need of help; and they hope therefore that their book will receive as large a share of public favour as that which has already been accorded to its predecessor.

Ilfracombe, July, 1863.

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THE

NORTH-DEVON SCENERY-BOOK.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

THE following account of a month's ramble through North Devon is professedly an extract from the diary of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. He, as it will appear, was a clerk in the office of Messrs. Carsford and Gritstone, Merchants, of Bristol; and was sent by his employers on a matter of business to the chief towns in the North of Devon, with the understanding that he was to combine with his work all the pleasure which in the given time he might be able to extract from the country through which he travelled.

He seems to have been a person of average education and good feeling, and to have jotted down from day to day in his note-book whatever he noticed and whatever he enjoyed, without reticence and with no ulterior view than that of recording for his own after pleasure that in which he took a pleasure at the time being.

Perhaps, therefore, a staid and critical reader will have to make some allowance for the high spirits and careless style which are natural on such an occasion. The editor might, of course, have recast Mr. Carnegie's notes in a more serious and sober-minded form, but they would probably have lost much of their vigour and all their freshness in the operation.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I GOT A HOLIDAY.

It happened about the middle of last May that ever was, that I was suddenly summoned one fine morning into the private room of Mr. Carsford, the respected head of the well-known firm of Carsford and Gritstone, Merchants, of Bristol, whom I have the honour of serving.

"Ah, Mr. Carnegie," said my employer, turning the glitter of his gold-spectacles upon me as I entered, "I have sent for you to give you a little commission, which I have no doubt you will execute for us with much ability." And then he proceeded to inform me that I was desired to betake myself without loss of time to certain towns in the North of Devon, and there make divers enquiries and investigations which, as they were connected with

our large and increasing business, I need not here specify.

"And," added Mr. Carsford, "we entrust this matter to you, partly because we are sure that it will be ably and cautiously performed, and partly because we have observed that your unremitting attention to our business" (so he was good enough to say) "has had a prejudicial effect upon your usual health, and we think a short holiday will be good for you as well as for us. You may take a month to execute this commission in, and" (putting a bank-note into my hand) "this will pay your travelling expenses as far as our own business is concerned."

I needn't repeat my grateful thanks and expressions of delight.—In fact I was so pleased that I don't quite know what I did say. A month's holiday! A whole month! Thirty-one days of pure air and bright sunshine, and prospect of green fields and shining sea,

to a man whose daily view had been bounded for the last two years by a smoke-dried brick wall and a deserted waterless pump, which the dingy sparrows had taken possession of as an undisturbed fighting ground.

I went home at once; I opened the matter promptly and without circumlocution to my friend Sharp, who nearly tore the ends off my coat-tails in the excess of his sympathy.

(I must here put in a parenthesis—though I know one oughtn't to write parentheses—and here is one inside another, and I don't know how many more coming—about Sharp. He followed me home one dark night, at a very late hour, when I was for a solitary special occasion, entrusted by my landlady Mrs. Jones with a latch-key. I had him cried at an expense of one-and-sixpence, and made enquiries at the nearest police-station, so many in fact that the Inspector at last grimly requested me to throw him over the quay with a brick-bat round his

neck—which I didn't do, but bought a collar for him instead, to his intense delight and pride. He is a short-haired, short-legged, bright-eyed terrier, of the most inquisitive and self-possessed temperament possible. He is, if I must tell the truth, the real master of the house in which I live, for he not only invariably has his own way with me, but he has also contrived to get upon the weak side of Mrs. Jones, who manages me in matters domestic very much to my comfort and pecuniary advantage. He lies on an old office coat in my sitting room, during business hours, and obliges me to take him out for a long walk in some make-believe fields in the neighbourhood of my lodgings, every day when office hours are over.)

That is Sharp's parenthesis—which being done, I may go on to say that I lost no time in completing the necessary arrangements for the morrow morning on which we were to start.

I put a change of light clothes and etceteras in a knapsack, which had once done good service in Wales. I tied up my trout-rod, walking-stick, and umbrella, in a neat bundle. I packed up a small black portmanteau, as a reserve, not omitting therein a few quires of writing and drying paper, and one or two books of natural history, (which is a hobby of mine,) and directed the same, "Andrew Carnegie, Royal Clarence Hotel, Ilfracombe.—To be left till called for." A tin box for specimens, a few odd bottles and small cases for divers objects in prospect, and a fishing basket, completed my arrangements.

And then Sharp and I sat down to supper with quietly happy and contemplative minds, and waited the coming of the eventful morning with all that calm solidity which is the avowed characteristic of the British animal, whether in or out of his native home.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN CHANNEL.

At last the morning breaks upon which Sharp and I are to begin our travels. A glorious morning too it is, a maiden morning, fresh and gleaming, robed in violet and crowned in amber. The Clifton Terraces up among the windy trees are glittering in lines of fire-stained alabaster. The tower of S. Mary Redcliffe shines out a pillar of grey silver above the black sea of billowy smoke which is surging at its base. Glad enough am I to leave the dirt and din and confusion of these southern head-quarters of money-making, where cleanliness is shown to be less connected with commerce than with godliness, and where the full force of the term "*filthy* lucre" becomes apparent to the most obtuse mind.

Presently we are standing by the Cumberland Docks, Sharp and I, contemplating the steamer which is to take us down channel, and which is already puffing out fussy jets of white steam, and jingling a big brassy bell, and lashing the dock-water unnecessarily with restless paddle-wheels, and altogether behaving in an impatient and irritating manner. Sharp mounts guard on the top of my portmanteau, whence he descends at times for the purpose of making raids upon the legs of incautious small boys, whose overtures of civility he first declines and then resents.

Before many minutes have been consumed in this exciting pastime, a prolonged jangling of the bell, and a furious screaming of the most dissonant of steam-whistles, warn us that the voyage is about to commence. And as we hurry on board so it does begin, greatly to Sharp's indignation, who takes the churning of the paddle-wheels first as a personal insult

and afterwards as an inevitable evil, and in consequence alternately barks and howls, to the great disgust of the other passengers.

I feel that I should like (were it not for the absolute certainty of wasting more ink and paper than I can afford) to write an endless amount of notes on voyages in general and this in particular. One sees and remembers so much when one first comes out into light and life after the dull routine of daily work. I mentally photographed every personage on board, from the short burly captain whose small oilskin cap and voluminous pea-jacket made him resemble a peripatetic model of an Egyptian Pyramid, to the youngest infant who made more noise than Sharp, and was (I thought) far more disagreeable.

And the voyage itself! How pleasant to drop down with the ebb under the overhanging greenery of the great Leigh woods, so suggestive of endless shadow and coolness in parching

summer weather! What quaintly beautiful reaches of the river (muddiest and slowest of all Avons) open out unexpectedly upon us! And here, where the banks lower and recede and the white gulls are screaming and hovering about in the tide-way, here is salt water at last! A fresh westerly wind blows in our faces as we turn Westward Ho! (You see I don't pretend to be as nautical in my language as I ought to be.) There is a direct link between me and the great Atlantic at last!

Now we pass the little islands of the Holmes, with the stately lighthouse keeping wakeful vigil in the restless sea. And there are the white houses of Weston—which Bristol people *will* call Weston-Super-*Mare* (pronouncing the last word as though it alluded to a female horse instead of the trackless ocean). And now the channel widens, and the water is really blue and sparkling, and the cliffs are sea-cliffs. And here we are tossing about in the race of

the great Foreland—that point far away west is Rillage, beyond which lie the breezy hills of Ilfracombe; and here in this small bay is the termination of my voyage. For here is Lynmouth, with its half-circle of irregular houses, its brawling stream and overhanging woods; and high up among the trees, 900 feet high, is Lynton, to which I haven't the smallest intention of ascending to-day.

No! Place me (and Sharp) under that rustling elm which overhangs the clear brown moorland stream (knapsack and etceteras being safely esconced in the neighbouring Hotel) let my eyes drink their full of flashing water and breaking sea, and rolling wood and glorious summer light and life,—let my ears absorb the music of the hurrying Lyn, and the chorus of the echoing sea,—let Sharp amuse himself by catching (and eating) impertinent flies and making forays after (imaginary) water-rats,—we ask no higher pleasure for to-day. To-

morrow we will "do" our Lynton, and our Lynmouth, and our Watersmeet, and our Valley of Rocks, with due perseverance and conscientiousness.

To-day shall be given up to the pleasures of receptivity.

To-day we will lie in the sunshine and be glad.

CHAPTER III.

LYNMOUTH.

When Sharp and I are on our travels we never do things in an orderly and orthodox manner, on principle. One has so much order and method in working days at home, that when one is out for a holiday the change does not seem to be complete unless one is as disorderly as a respectable man can be. So finding that Lynton preceded Lynmouth in my Guide-Book, and that it was the correct thing to begin with the "Valley of Rocks," I made up my mind at once to take that sight, whatever it might be, last: and to begin with Lynmouth,—and that entirely after my own fashion, and Sharp's.

Therefore having locked up the Guide-Book in my portmanteau (which is the best place

for works of that kind), I strolled quietly out of the inn door, and sat down on the nearest seat I could find—the parapet of the bridge over the brown Lyn—and began to whistle. To me enters by and bye a small boy with red cheeks and very large brown eyes;

"Ave a donkey pleys Sur? Tak-ee tu W'r'smeet vur sixpence and back!"

"Don't want to go to Watersmeet my boy," I replied, "and I haven't got 'sixpence and back' to give you if I wanted to go there."

The boy grinned, but presently became persistent and troublesome. I caught Sharp's eye, and quietly turned my thumb down (which I believe to be a classical if not an original mode of communicating my wishes on the point). I hear a yell of terror. The rustic is gone.—Sharp really *has* a partiality for the ancles of young and tender boys.

Upon Sharp's return (he makes quite a triumphal procession of himself after victories

of this kind) I propose an extension of our walk. He agrees, and we proceed. We stroll leisurely up a rather disagreeably steep hill towards Lynton: we do not arrive at that place for reasons previously mentioned, but we stop short at a small green door on the left hand side of the road, about thirty yards up the hill. From careful study of the Guide-Book I am induced to believe that this is the entrance to Sir William Herries' grounds, which are liberally thrown open to strangers. I knock and nobody comes. I ring and nobody comes. I knock and ring and nobody comes. Finally I sit down and whistle, and Sharp catches flies, till somebody does come,—an elderly lady, who has a pocket handkerchief tied over her head, and appears to be pervaded with a general sense of rheumatism and tracts. She conducts us (looking at Sharp dubiously who pretends to take no notice of her at all) through some neat gravel walks, bordered with

trim evergreens and luxuriant ferns, across a tiny bridge, and along a winding path till we arrive at a small wicket-gate.

"You will keep the path, sir, if you please," said my conductress, "and when you return you will be good enough to step into the house" (*why* do people of a certain class always "step in"? Could they come in some other way, or couldn't they? And if they could would they sometimes do it for a change?) "and write your name in the Family's" (with a very large F) "Visitors-Book."

So saying, she left us, to my huge delight. I go on a few steps, and stop suddenly, arrested by a sudden shriek of

"O my! Come here, do you hear sir! O you nasty good-for-nothing thief you!"

Says my prophetic soul, "that's Sharp," and Sharp it was: for that playful quadruped returns (again in a triumphal procession) bear-

ing as *spolia opima* the immaculate head-dress of the bereaved housekeeper, which a too eager zephyr had carried away in the nick of time—for Sharp.

I return the garment, and make proper apologies.

"'Taint your fault sir, I knows," said the housekeeper, forgetting her grammar and her dignity in her excitement, "but if ever I lets a blessed dog inside them there gates again I'll know the reason why;" and so saying she retreated once more, and this time, successfully.

The result of my two hours ramble was that I became unprepared to mention a spot in England which I should prefer to this scrap of ground as a place for spending two summer hours in. And it is a scrap of a place after all—only a few hundred yards of a steep deeply-cloven ravine, robed up to the very sky-line in thick umbrageous wood and tangled

undergrowth. Through the centre of the gorge rushes the ruddy-brown Lyn, his brows flecked with multitudinous moorland foam-drops, his voice lusty and cheerful, his path—the path which a true-born mountain stream loves with all its heart—a chaotic wilderness of boulder-built precipices and chasms: here is a flashing waterfall, singing as it streams in the streaming sunlight: here is a still deep pool shaded by patriarchal ferns and margined by greenest tenderest moss.

And then I pounce suddenly upon a prize: for on a water-worn stone by the edge of the stream, sprinkled by a little trickling cascade, is a moss-like tuft which I know not to be moss, but to be none other than the rare Filmy-Fern (*Hymenophyllum Tunbridgense*) which is seldom met with out of the collections of fern-growers. And this exquisitely-delicate plant with its azure chalice-shaped blossoms, and its tiny sprays of tender-green

leaves, which are like a fairy's miniature modelling of a trailing ivy-wreath, is *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, the most beautiful of English wild-flowers, and one which every gardener should cultivate as the loveliest of ornaments for his rock-work, and the prettiest of pendants in the hanging-baskets of his greenhouse, or conservatory.

I resist the temptation of picking a frond or two of *Osmunda*, which flourishes luxuriantly by the waterside, because it has evidently been planted where it grows: nor do I yield to a natural longing which prompts me to "tickle" that elderly black-backed trout, who has got his head under a cool stone and his tail no-where-in-particular, and who looks, to an uninstructed eye, like a riband of river-weed as he sways to and fro in the seething eddy.

But Sharp and I "do our contemplation" instead. We lie under a rustling oak-tree on the softest of mossy banks, and we absorb the

balmy currents of the summer wind as it comes up from the blue ocean-water down below, and whispers to the whispering larches, and strays round the sturdy oaks, and at length settles to sleep among the crowns of the coy Lady-Ferns, down in the gloaming of the shadowy hill-side wood.

Finally, I arrive at a settled conviction that life is a state in which the harder one's work is, the more intense is the enjoyment which at last rewards the labourer. And Sharp, to whom I make this by-no-means-original remark, opens his eyes and wags his tail in token of sympathy, and coils himself round and round in a fresh bed of cool moss, and is promptly sleeping the sleep of the just—totally undisturbed by any qualms of conscience in the matter of those questionable exploits of his which, as a truthful historian, I have been obliged to chronicle in my wandering diary.

CHAPTER IV.

WATERSMEET.

But I had by no means done all that might be done in and about Lynmouth; and this began to weigh somewhat heavily on my mind, after Sharp and I had had our following morning's plunge in the freshest (and pebbliest) of six-o'clock flood-tides.

For instance, we had not ascended Countisbury.

Now my Guide-Book says, with a dogmatic simplicity which is positively sublime,

"Ascend Countisbury Hill: 1,100 feet."

Here, after one has gone through the tedious arithmetical operation ("tens, twenties, hundreds," and so on) requisite for a right conclusion as to the amount of feet specified,

there remains the simple fact that *a* man once climbed to the height of so-and-so feet.

One naturally asks, With what result?

I apply again to the Guide-Book.

"Notice a Camp to the right of the road," &c., &c., says that erudite volume.

Indeed! "Notice a Camp"! I should rather think so! Who on earth *could* notice a Camp after he had toiled up a turnpike road on a broiling summer-day, to the extent of (so-and-so) feet above the sea-level?

No! Sharp and I will be cleverer for once than our green-backed Instructor.

We will *not* ascend Countisbury.

On the contrary, we will leave its respectable height and its sultry glare for braver travellers; and we will betake ourselves to cool waters and pleasant shade, and that leisurely progression which seems specially adapted to the scene and the season.

In a word, we go to Watersmeet: and that

not on a donkey, as the ruddy-faced youth of yesterday suggested, or by that straight-forward road which my Guide-Book is again good enough to recommend.

For I sling my basket behind me, and take my rod (with the lightest cast of likeliest flies thereto attached) in my hand; and so up the rushing stream of the brown Lyn for ever and for ever—all among all manner of bushes; all under all sorts of trees; all round and against all kinds of hardest and most angular of rocks and slipperiest of boulders:—now (well) out of the water—now well into it.

Never mind! I agree with Mr. Toots: "its of no consequence, thank you": and "what's the odds so long as you" catch little trout and "are" thoroughly moist and "happy?"

So, at length, with a full basket of fish, and very wet feet, (Sharp is wet all over, having lost me at least half-a-dozen trout by plunging—accidentally of course—into any pool in

which any big fish was on the point of "taking" me, that is of swallowing my simulated fly and dissimulated hook,) so, with a plethora of trout, and in the serenest of minds we arrive at Watersmeet.

It is difficult to describe Watersmeet.

There are two rivers of colour and sound and fragrance, flowing down from the purple moor in two river-beds of greenest foliage; and, meeting here, a broader river of beauty and music ripples on in winding curves of light and shadow, till all light and music are lost in the glitter and the chorus of the neighbouring full-voiced sea.

So it seemed to me. Though after all I knew it was but where, under the shade of the summer woods, the hurrying waters of the two Lyns united, after lonely wanderings in far-off Exmoor, and whence they rambled onwards beneath red-stained scarp and fern-crowned slope to the fuller waters of the ever-wandering ocean.

That was the Watersmeet up among the rustling hills.

And yet, beautiful as that was, Lynmouth will ever live in my memory, not for that alone, or for that chief of all, but rather for that other Watersmeet down by the murmuring sea.

It is now deep midnight, but I lie awake, (which is more than I can say for Sharp, since he is coiled up in the blackest of balls at my feet and is snoring horribly,) I lie awake on this warm summer night with the full moon streaming in at my open window, and as I lie so I listen. There is a great deal to be heard —as there always is if one will only listen.

I hear the quiet lapping of the sea among the slushing beach-pebbles, and its rolling swirl as it eddies about the angles of the weed-grown rocks: now a white owl hoots fitfully about some far-off hill-barton: now a night-jar is clamouring in the hill-side woods: now a stray footstep patters down the empty

village street: now a fisherman's boat grates slowly against the wet wood-work of the pier-head: now a sudden gusty wind rustles among the sleeping trees for an instant, and is gone.

But in all and above all and every sound is the sound of the merry brown Lyn. I hear the tinkling melody of its treble as its surface water is falling and falling in ten thousand tiny cascades and streamlets, the full rich harmony of its tenor and bass as the under-current sweeps and rolls and gathers in the lower depths of its rocky bed.

Stay! Surely I am becoming drowsy: surely that marvellous music is hushing, is "fainter still and fainter pealing." It cannot be so: but it *is*—and—

I know, now.

It is the Watersmeet.

I look at my watch by the moonlight. Yes! In another five minutes it will be high-water. The flood tide is coming into the Lyn from the misty Atlantic.

All along the coast the fall of the yeasty breakers is clearly audible: but, now, in the lower channel of the Lyn there is no sound: there the waters have met; and in the joy of their meeting the moorland symphony is hushed, the song of the sea is stilled.

I go to sleep, and dream about that great Peace which shall surely come when Eternity meets Time at the last flood-tide.

CHAPTER V.

LYNTON.

To-day we devote to Lynton.

By way of preparation for the inevitable toils of the intervening hill we take another early plunge in the cool salt sea, and while Sharp is fruitlessly endeavouring to dry himself by sidelong rubbings against damp sea-weed-covered rocks, and frantic rollings in wet gravel and wetter sand, I sit down and sketch the picturesque Tower of crumbling sandstone which springs from the termination of the Lynmouth pier.

It was evidently made to be sketched.

I am told that it was built years ago after the fashion of one of the many towers on the Rhine, and that though in a gale of wind it affords some slight protection as a look-out to

careful coastguard or anxious fishermen, it is on the whole of no great use. And, indeed, upon examination I find that the actual look-out chamber is only raised by a few feet above the level of the pier, and that the whole of the upper part of the Tower, with its many loop-holes and picturesque machicolations, is inaccessible except to the clamouring jack-daws and the white-winged sea-gulls. So that perhaps a practical and strong-minded person might be tempted to anathematise it as a sham, and to desire that the considerable sum of money which it undoubtedly cost had been spent to some better purpose. And yet upon this bright and beautiful morning I would rather do most things than endorse such a verdict.

Surely it *is* useful when it stands out there as a grey pillar, against the sultry morning haze; surely it is useful when at night-fall it stands up against the black hills, as a column of lurid

Hanhart lith

LYNMOUTH.

light—or as a shape, of earth and yet scarce earthly, radiant with the purple and the gold which (like the mantle of the Prophet) the parting sun has left behind him.

It is of use, indeed, simply *because it is beautiful:* and no amount of practical and strong-minded people shall ever make me think otherwise.

And now, as I have made up my mind and finished my drawing, I shall go up *that* hill to Lynton. The Guide-Book says that it is five hundred feet high; I say that I wish it was not. But it has to be climbed, and so we may as well set off at once.

And as we climb, the lovely glimpses of ravine and wood and sea which one catches at every turn go far to reconcile one to the ascent. What wonderful colours in those many-treed woods, now in full leafage! And how many things are there not to be seen—things which one would never see in Bristol

if one "lived for ever (there) and was washed afterwards." There is a real cuckoo in a hawthorn hedge, with his tiny friend the wryneck *(Yunx torquilla)* flittering about after him. And that is a corncrake—a bencrake as the boys hereabouts call him—or the Devonshire nightingale as a fat and facetious friend of mine has surnamed him. What a pleasant summery sound he makes! I wonder if his throat ever becomes sore with his eternal "chro-ake"! I wish I could entice him to pay a visit to those (brick) fields down Bristol way, of which Sharp is so fond: one might then on an emergency almost "make believe" a real country walk.

And this is Lynton. Two or three remarkably promising-looking hotels: a profusion of tempting lodgings scattered about everywhere, in the trees and out of the trees, with sea-views and country-views and views of every description: and a Church (which is evidently

in sore need of an archæologically-inclined churchwarden), and a post-office, and a shop.

Very good: such is Lynton: now we will go and see the Valley of Rocks.

At this stage of my existence, "'Ave a guide, Sur, to the Valley, pleys Sur?" queries the minutest of boys, with the brightest of eyes and the clearest of all clear Devonshire complexions.

"Certainly not!" I reply, with such truly British dignity as I can command at the crisis.

"Do'ee know ware the Valley be, Sur?" persists my tormentor, with a refinement of respectful satire which is worthy of a greater occasion.

"Not in the least," I rejoin with a judicious mixture of indifference and severity.

The small boy is on the point of continuing the controversy (in which I shall plainly be worsted), when Sharp happily comes to my rescue. He simply opens and closes his

mouth in the neighbourhood of the youth's ancles—who exits, howling: and Sharp, after a brief absence, returns "in procession," as before recorded.

So I find my Valley without assistance: and it is well worth finding. How it "got there" is more than I should like to settle with any pretence of dogmatic security—though I have theories on the subject of the glacial epoch, thinking that I can see the traces of the icebergs which dropped huge quartz boulders along the hills of Devonshire, and deposited nodules of foreign flint in the seams of her native slate; and believing that the retiring waters of that cold season denuded her rounded downs and hollowed her narrow valleys, and strewed her face with such waste places of chaotic stones as no mere ordinary decomposition of cliff and scarp could ever accomplish.

However that may be, here, between two

uneven hill-ridges is, without doubt, a Valley of Rocks: for the higher slope of the two is from top to bottom a wilderness of bare spiky uplifted strata, and shaly sliding stones, and massive immoveable boulders, strewn and tossed and scattered in inconceivable confusion. Surely some mighty Northern Ice-King did a long day's sowing and harrowing on this hill-side in the days that are no more! The other ridge is smoothly treacherous: it rises with a fair green curve to its topmost height and then plunges headlong with a dizzy precipice of some eight or nine hundred feet of descent to the rocking surge below.

I climb a natural rock-turret (which the people hereabouts call the Castle-Rock) and contemplate. What a beautiful stretch of wavering coast-line right away to the far-off breezy Foreland! And what a fresh west wind, redolent of the great Atlantic water, comes up fitfully over the western hills!

This is all that I shall try to see of Lynton: no doubt there is many another ramble and excursion which my Guide-Book would insist upon my taking: but I shall find nothing more glorious than this,—here I shall stay, stolidly oblivious of other things, till the great sun goes down an orb of scarlet fire behind the blue ocean-verge.

Then calm supper and peaceful bed. *And*, to-morrow, Exmoor Ho!

CHAPTER VI.

EXMOOR.

Very early on the following morning we set out on our ramble from Lynmouth to Exmoor.

I hired for the occasion an animal which was called by its imaginative proprietor a pony. It might have been such. I do not say that it was not. But then I could not certainly affirm that it was. It was covered with a profusion of long shaggy hair, which hung in dingy festoons about the greater part of its form, and which on its neck was "differentiated" into a straight and stiff excrescence, more resembling an ancient and not clean nail-brush than any other known production.

It had a strictly peculiar method of progression, which was something between that of a crab and a sandhopper. Its temperament was

of the "nervo-lymphatic," or stolidly-impulsive sort. Its whole appearance was "amorphous." And its specific name was Thomas.

Upon this quadruped, whatever it really was, I set out for Exmoor, slinging a fishing-basket (with a change of clothes and other necessaries in it) across my shoulder, and carrying a fishing-rod in my right hand. Sharp reposes in my large "fish-pocket," whence proceed at intervals divers subterraneous or rather subvestiarian growls, indicative of his utter disapprobation of the pace and general characteristics of his new conveyance.

We jog quietly up the hill to Watersmeet without adventure.

At this point of the journey my pony (if it be a pony) advances in a promptly dogged manner to the extreme verge of a disagreeable precipice, where it halts, extends its ewe-neck over the abyss, and contemplates the prospect (of immediate suicide) with obvious determination.

As I am in a hurry to get out upon the moor I naturally object to this state of things, and consequently pull the right rein, as a gentle hint that it would be better to proceed by the high road. Thomas shows immediate symptoms of his intention to walk slowly over the precipice. Were he to do so I should, of course, be hurled over the scarp, and afterwards be conveyed in a mangled state by the United-Lyn Grand-Junction Water-Line, to the sea. Consequently I slide, ignominiously perhaps, over Thomas' tail, and prod him casually with the spike of my fishing-rod. He responds to this observation by advancing in the direction of the right road as readily as if it had always been his intention so to do. We advance slowly, I leading him, as the path still continues to be bounded by an unprotected precipice, till we come to a pretty bridge which crosses the Lyn, where I remount and we go on merrily.

In consequence of this slight adventure I make a mental memorandum never to ride a native Exmoor pony (who is distinguished by the absence of "a mouth" and the presence of a stiff and utterly unbendable neck) without previously arming myself with the third joint of a fishing-rod terminated by a well-sharpened spike.

Rising the hill we arrive on elevated ground, not far from the scattered village of Brendon, from which plateau there is a glorious view of undulating hill and wood, stretching away to the glittering sea on one side, and to the purple moor on the other.

Presently we are pacing gently over the dry short crisp turf of Scob Hill, once famous as the haunt of the red deer, and still infamous as the resort of vipers. Objecting to these latter animals I restrain my ardour, which would lead me to botanize among the bristly tufts of furze and heather; and even pass by

several likely looking bog-holes, black and treacherous, and yet not unbeautiful with their covering of prismatic scum, and their fringing of the white blossoms of the pretty marsh ranunculus.

By and bye, as the day waxes into life and light, and the cheerful sun shines out, and the passing cloud-shadows flit across the hills, and the larks' songs are loud and persistent, I perceive that, imperceptibly, the great Moor has gathered around me.

I realize, suddenly, that I am utterly alone, in the midst of an endless rolling sea of billowy hills.

Wherever I look, still the view is the same. There is something almost awful in the endless sameness. And yet, as in the mid-centre of the rolling Atlantic—cousin or sister to the rolling moorland—there is infinite variety in infinite sameness.

Here a mighty hill-surge, crested with golden

aromatic gorse-blooms heaves up mightily its gigantic volume, to sink into a low wide marshy valley, where a tiny streamlet rattles along its pebbly bed, half hidden by swaying ferns and tender-green water-plants, and hurrying on (as all true life hastens) to a future of wider, deeper, and less solitary progress. Here is a broken ground of low undulations, the "chopping sea" of the troubled Atlantic. Here a broad wide calm of airy table-land, decorated with the nodding plumes of the silvery cotton-grass, and vocal with a swelling chorus of unseen larks, the rain of whose heaven-born Jubilates is as the

> "Sound of vernal showers
> On the twinkling grass."

Yes—at last I know that I am in the heart of beautiful Exmoor.

I seem to know this and no more, as I ride slowly onwards, saturated with a strangely new feeling of quiet peace; nor do I wake fully

from this realized dream of bygone hours of toil and trouble, till the day-shadows lengthen and the sun is a crimson fire-ball above a far-off green hill-wave. Then I know that here is my halting place—a wayside inn, solitary in the solitary moor, known to men as the "Red Deer" Inn, to me as the omphalos of Exmoor, the central point of that material beauty which is the connecting link between the spirit of nature and the soul of man.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE FOREST.

What is the Forest?

A windy, sun-scorched, treeless, moorland waste; with no sign of life or motion in it, save the screaming of the grey sea-gull and the formless shadows of the flying Atlantic clouds.

So it seemed to me as, after a long day's ramble, I toiled up the broken ascent of a miniature ravine along the track of a streamlet, which clung to the hill-side as it slid from blade to blade and stone to stone, now circling in a glittering fern-hidden pool, now lost in tangled roots of greenest sphagnum, now falling in wild and unexpected leaps to meet the

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waters of the gleaming river in the valley below.

On the hill-summit I stood at last, a bleak bare table-land some thousand feet above the Atlantic breakers, standing alone, isolated from the rolling lines of its fellows, a solitary wave-crest petrified in that untrodden waste of nature. Under my feet, the dense spongy masses of the peat-turf brightened here and there by stray blossoms of the white marsh ranunculus, and the plumes of the airy cotton-grass nodding fantastically in the breath of the evening wind—overhead, the hymn of the lark, the glancing of bright blue butterflies, the measured flight of a great herring-gull wending its way homeward in perfect and unwonted silence, as though awed by the strange solitariness of that cloud-lapped region.

As I turned to gaze on the last plunge of the fiery sun, rushing in purple glory through the grey outline of a distant hill-chasm, my

eyes fell on a group of figures which would have formed no unworthy study for any artist's pencil or any poet's pen. The group consisted of a peat-cutter and his family out at work on the lonely moor, in poverty and in rags. He, a strong stalwart giant, bronzed with sun and rain, a descendant of the aboriginal Briton, ruddy-featured, with raven-black unkempt hair, and piercing blackest eyes, was working as for life, with some uncouth implement, at the side of a broad ditch, which he had excavated across the moor-summit—cutting fuel, as he told me, for his little "cot," which nestled by the water-side, down in the distant valley. His peat-basket and his old and tattered jacket were lying under the shelter of a rude turf fence hard by, guarded by a rough and wiry shepherd-dog, who showed an ominous set of white teeth as I advanced, and was only pacified when a little girl of some six summers bounded up to him, and, throwing her arms

round his brawny neck, smothered his growling in her pretty embrace. She too, like her father, was of the old British type of form—a strange beauty, which still lingers in the Far West—lithe and limber, graceful and energetic in every movement, black haired and eyelashed, with a soft sunlit complexion, and a bright intelligence in her clear dark eyes.

A few kindly words, and the gift of a small superfluity of coin to the little one as a fairing for the next country revel, gained me the confidence of the lovely family; and eventually I accepted the proffered hospitality of the tired labourer, and, oblivious of the seductions of the "Red Deer" hostel, removed myself and Sharp to our new friend's "lit cot" as he called it, where he promised us a night's shelter and a supper of barley bread.

The same barley bread and my day's catch of trout, with the clear water of the stream tempered by a flask of brandy, rendered us

independent of this world's goods, and transformed the cob walls of the cottage into "marble halls" and a palace of all calm delights.

As we sat on the low oaken settle, full in the blaze of the cheerful peat-fire, smoking our after-supper pipes of meditation and contentment, I moralized, between the intervals of my host's conversation, on the wondrous privileges of this newly-found Utopia.

Who would not live (if only there were houses) in so favoured a spot? Who would not exchange the wealth and hurry and din of a Bristolian Babylon, for the poverty and leisure and eternal quiet of beautiful Exmoor?

There, in the heart of that smoke-teeming, iron-girt labyrinth of money-makers, life is a necessary evil; one *must* live even there, for nature bids us prefer even such an existence to the easy death of a city Bridge and the ghastly exposure of a workhouse Morgue.

Here, on the Forest, the mere act of inhaling the vital air is an inconceivable delight: how freshly the wind sings about one's brow, yet aching from work and anxiety—how elastic the turf under one's feet—how gloriously free the lark's song, high in the unseen sky-region!

Free! Aye, it is this, the realization of freedom in the depth and height of its fulness, which mantles on the furrowed brow and calms the fevered heart. Free to think—to move—to love—to pray;—none may hinder here—none may come between the worshipper and the ideal. The scoffer, the idler, the sensualist, the fool, where are they, O where? Echo on the forest will not even take the trouble to answer "where?"

The rippling trout-stream with its multitudinous voices, its gleaming "flats," its whirling eddies, its roaring falls, and its quiet slumbers beneath the shadow of the old-world oaks, knows them not; the grey-winged owl is the

only unconscious "winged-word" of reproach and ill-omen—the cuckoo, shouting from hill to hill, sees no greater satirist of mankind than himself; there is no under-roof of care and agony interposed between earth and heaven, no unseen skeleton-host camped, with lurid watch-fire and shadowy standard, about the worshipper of nature and of God.

Says the peasant, somewhere about this portion of my reverie, "It be a terrible place, surely, this, o' winter nights": and as his little girl crept closer and closer to his chair he told me how the winter wind raves and roars all about the dark hills, and the rain bursts in water-floods from the heart of the clouds, whose bases rest, a thousand feet beneath, on the rocking Atlantic surges:—how the snow lies for months and months in the dead winter, vexed only by the unquiet wandering wind, which gathers it in white, weird, flying squadrons, hurrying it into

unknown rifts and chasms, entangling it among the sighing branches of withered and mangled tree-corpses, sweeping it away like hill-mists into the midst of the frozen valley waters, struggling with sharp complaining in the restraints of their glittering chains. All this, and more than this, my host poured forth in his native Doric, as a man of kindly heart, and a warm inbred love of nature, not too deep in his bosom for words,—or tears, if a natural pity should ever evoke them.

Rambling on in this discursive mood, we touch on subject after subject whose connecting links were too subtle for a mere word discrimination.

At length I remark "Half an hour before I met you and little Nelly I discovered an old British Camp,—a real discovery it was of an indubitable Camp, with its line of outer earthworks as perfect, gateway and all, as when it was first piled—and it is to be found in no

book or antiquarian memoir in all the three kingdoms. There it stood, a circular crown on the brow of a lonely conical hill, washed on three sides by the wanderings of the Barle, out of bow-shot from all the neighbouring heights, within reach of abundance of water and provisions, for three valleys trended from it in a triple direction, commanding a wide and glorious view of peak and ravine, centrally placed in the very heart of 'the Forest.' In truth, those old Britons knew something of the art of fastnesses, if they were not well skilled in the art of war. Did you ever see the stronghold of your ancestors, friend Jan?"

"I'm thinking we're somewhere about Ring Castle" quoth Jan, with sly good humour in his eye. "Camp indeed! I don't know much about Camps, but I know it were something different to any granfer o' mine as builded Ring Castle!"

Hereupon he hurled up the broad chimney

a whole series of mystery-betokening smoke cloudlets.

"Did 'ee ever hear tell o' Pixies?" quoth John; again, after a pause.

"And fairy rings?" he added, as Nelly emerged from a dark corner and nestled close to her father's shoulder.

I answered that I had heard of the west-country fairies, a race of spirits peculiar for their diminutive beauty and for their friendly dealings with mankind.

"Well," said John, "this here be all about it," And he proceeded to tell me the following pretty legend, which I have translated out of the broad and vigorous dialect in which it was related.

"Ever so long ago, the Pixies were at war with the mine-spirits, who live underground all about the forest and the wild hill-country in its neighbourhood. Now, the Pixies being perfectly harmless, and withal goodnatured to

excess, weren't at all a match for the evil-nurtured earth-demons, who were always forging all kinds of fearful weapons in their underground armories, and overcoming their poor little foes by all manner of unfair and unexpected stratagems. But the Pixie Queen of those days, being, like all women, fertile in resources, bethought her of a means of escape from the unbearable tyranny of her oppressors. Ever since the days of Merlin, running water, the numbers three and seven, and the mysteries of the emblematic circle, have been sure protection against the machinations of the foul fiend and his allies. And the Fairy Queen, like a wise woman, recollected this fact, and, like a wiser woman, applied it: for she assembled all her subjects, and bade them build on the summit of a central Exmoor peak, that strange circle which you have seen to-day.

"But it was no common building which

they erected, for with every stone and turf that the builders laid they buried the memory of some kindly deed which the good Pixies had done to the race of men: and so, when the magic ring was completed, the baffled demons plotted and raved in vain around its sacred enclosure.

"Nor was this all. For when the grey morning broke upon that first night of victory and repose, as the driving mists rolled upwards and swept along the hill-tops like the advanced-guard of a victorious army" (I am not sure that this was John's own similitude) "from the summit of the fairy fortification ring after ring of faintest amber-tinted vapour rose up, and floated away in the brightening sky, each on its own mission of safety and of peace.

"For these tiny wreathlets wandered hither and thither all over the broad expanse of the Exmoor country, and wherever the grass was greenest and softest, and the neighbouring

stream sang most merrily, and the sunlight was purest and the moonbeams brightest, there these magical circles sank down softly on the level sward, and left no traces behind them of what they had been, or whence they had journeyed.

"But, after a while, from each soft resting place there sprang a ring of greenest grass, which flourished and grew year by year, and within whose safe enclosure the Pixies danced on moonlit nights in peace and security, unharmed by the demon rout, who were never seen above ground after that memorable morning.

"So we see that kind hearts and kind actions do not go unrewarded, even in other spheres than our own."

"And so," concluded John, "that's my story about the building of Ring Castle: and wise folks may talk for a year and a day without making me believe that there's any

other reason for fairy rings, leastwise hereabouts in Exmoor Forest."

Of course, after so fanciful a legend, it would have been absolute cruelty to have instilled any botanical notions into Jan's head with regard to the law of the circular increase of fungi and the like: so I "left him alone in his glory," and merely expressed my thanks for the pleasure which his story had given me.

Time and space would fail were I to set down all the wonderful histories with which John, learned at any rate in the superstitions of bygone years, beguiled the waning hours of the summer night.

But I must not forget with what seriousness he told me of that fierce gang of marauders, the Doones of Badgeworthy, infamous in moorland story, at whose name the Exmoor children quake and repent them full sore of their evil deeds.

One stormy day these ancient freebooters

suddenly appeared before a lone barton in an unfrequented part of their country, and burst the frail protection of bolt and door, being aware, like brave men as they were, that the farmer and his men were at work in their distant fields. But a little child and a servant girl were left in the house, and their fate was quickly determined. The girl, being more discreet than valorous, left her charge at the first symptom of danger, and hid herself in the neighbouring oven, which was of patriarchal size, and for her own sake one may trust was not hot. From her hiding place she heard the remainder of the story.

The Doones being very hungry and not over nice, and not succeeding in their extempore forage in kitchen and storehouse, laid hands on the unfortunate infant, cooked him, and eat him, with much unction and dispatch: and whilst they washed down his remnants with some of his father's old ale, chanted the

following refrain, by way, one may suppose, of dirge and epitaph:—

> "If any one asks who 'twas that eat thee,
> Tell them—the Doones of Badgeworthy."

Neither can I forget the wonderful history of another adventurer in those wilds—a gentleman rejoicing in the cacophonous name of Faggus, who possessed an "enchanted strawberry horse," an animal who was sagacious enough to do battle with hoof and teeth in its master's cause on the smallest provocation. Once the worthy pair were *in extremis* on Barnstaple Bridge, hemmed in on either side by pursuers who were thirsting for blood and vengeance. Whereupon the magical steed simply cleared the parapet, plunged some forty feet downwards into the rolling tidal estuary, and unconcernedly swam away with his burden beyond the reach of the enemy's missiles and anathemas.

Many a marvellous deliverance was similarly effected: but Nemesis of course comes in and winds up the story, and the required victory of good over evil was thus ingeniously secured.

The enchanted horse was eating his corn in a very unmagical and ordinary manner in the stable of a wayside inn, and his master was recreating himself by the inn fire, when a beggarman entered and asked relief from the freebooter, who, like Robin Hood and other worthies of his stamp, was sufficiently generous to give away freely that which did not rightly belong to him. During the colloquy which ensued, the beggarman, who was a detective of the period in disguise, contrived to pass a rope through the bacon-rack which decorated the kitchen ceiling, and adroitly slipping one end round his victim's feet, by a dexterous jerk suspended him, heels uppermost, in the air—a helpless and ignominious position, which was only a foretaste of the more serious

suspension which awaited him at the hands of justice. Of course the strawberry horse would have rescued his master with his usual dispatch and unconcern, had not the enchantment been broken by a comrade of the apparent beggar-man, who took the precaution of shooting the steed at the moment that his proprietor was captured.

So far my host: and pipe and fire being simultaneously exhausted, we betook ourselves to bed as the old Dutch clock creaked and clanged out the hour of twelve, and a white owl flitted across the casement and boomed out his solitary good-night as he vanished again into the waste.

In the tiniest of bedrooms and on the hardest of beds (a bed which would have left indelible marks on the person of that sensitive princess in the fairy tale, whose well-bred exterior was bruised by three peas latent under the same number of feather beds) we passed

the calmest of nights in the depths of a sleep too profound for opium or mandragora, and too soothing for any Mrs. Johnson now or to be extant.

And the awakening! So glorious an awakening.

A calm, cool, heavenly dawning in the early summer time: the clear, amber-hued light slept on the sleeping hills, sharpening their rolling outline against the grey sky, and brightening far away to the eastward into saffron and gold. A fresh wind came up softly and silently from the sea—the larks were high in the air, the echoes of their distant song mingling faintly with the twittering of the awakening birds from every turf and stone. From a neighbouring copse a cuckoo called to its brother across the vale; and above and through all, as an organ blends with the voicings of the far-off choir, the eternal murmurings of the river hidden beyond the hills swelled and

ceased, and came ever and again in the persistence of its perfect harmony.

I bade adieu to my host and his little daughter, with many promises of a speedy return, and wandered over the moor to the river side.

It is not, certainly, the fish which makes one love the fishing—though a metaphysician might write a chapter on the aptitude of man to seek for the unknown in the regions of uncertainty. It is the freedom of the boundless moorland, the freshness of the dewy morning, the vigour of the blazing noontide, the cool of the quiet evening, which soothe and strengthen the soul, and render it able to enjoy the populous solitude of nature, and to commune with her in the endless flow of her eloquent silence.

So I wandered happily on and onwards, now ensnaring a too-confiding troutlet from his resting-place in the tangled weeds, and

landing him, despite his objections, in all his bravery of grey and gold, on the thickset sward,—now gathering a tuft of white star-like marsh ranunculus, or a bunch of freshest forget-me-nots which mirrored their unregarded beauty in the seething eddies of the stream.

But at last the midday sun shone as he only can shine on Exmoor—a fierce, blistering, penetrating glare, reflected from every ripple of the river and every white stone on its banks. Fishing was out of the question: the trout were far too wise to leave their cool retreats. Walking was at first a nuisance, and finally an impossibility: so, perforce, I sought the shelter of half a dozen gnarled and wind-torn oaks, which fringed the river just beyond a glittering rapid and a foaming fall. "Here we lay," weather-bound with a vengance, shifting our quarters as the sun shifted his, utterly incapable of moving under pain of a

malignant fever fit, or a *coup de soleil.*

But in such a case it need not be a man's sole occupation to interpose a friendly bank or a mossy bough between the blaze of the sun and his own parched cuticle.

Irrespective of the glorious vista down that retiring valley, with its ever-shifting effects of light and shade, and the continual flow of remarks which the Barle addresses to me, and to which I seem to be always replying in the most fluviatile of dialects, with regard to his birth up in the silent hills, and his growth on the breezy moors, and his manhood down in the cultivated champaign far in the south country, and his prospects about that eternal sea to which he is hastening, and which he and I know and love so well,—besides all this, there was enough in the little oak-grove which protected us, aye, even in the circle of some half-dozen yards around our special lurking-place, to elicit any man's power of observation,

and fully occupy his mind for a month of such beautiful afternoons.

I am not deeply skilled in entomology, but I needed no book-learning to force my admiration of the countless myriads of insect forms which swarmed around. Butterflies of every hue flitted in and out; the great dragon-fly swept by on his gauzy sails, and his lesser cousin rustled his purple-blue wings as he shot away over the stream; the fern-fly slept lazily on his nodding couch above my head; the soldier-fly flashed his scarlet armour in the sun; and one little beetle, of the most brilliant opaque blue, crawled leisurely up to me from his perch on a red lichen cup, that I might contemplate his beauty at my ease, as it well deserved.

Then I had an audience in the court of all the ferns. The Bracken kept guard in solitary outposts, and compact squadrons, and serried lines, standing at ease in a soldier-like and

uncompromising manner, and refusing to take any notice of the solicitations of the wandering wind. A huge crown of the Male Fern represented the monarch of all he surveyed, bowing his feathery plumes right royally towards his lovely and delicate spouse, the Lady Fern. Then the sweet-scented Mountain-Fern displayed its silvery scales and golden resinous globules, swaying to and fro in the breeze, as though its office were to swing silver censers of myrrh and frankincense in the presence of the regal court.

One might swell the list of officers and attendants *ad infinitum*, and were I to betake myself to the sister court of the flowers, I should fill the pages of this brief diary long before I had exhausted the subject or one's natural delight therein. But I have written enough and to spare in proof of the original assertion, that there is no lack of novelty and occupation even for a wearied traveller who is forced to repose

in solitariness and silence on a ferny bank in the heart of Exmoor. No need of books, when the Book of Nature lies open before us, —no want of human voices by the side of running waters,—no necessity for the eloquence of divines or the theories of moralists, when the very insects and the stones at our feet can homilize and humanize us to our heart's content.

"Depend upon it," says the author of *Ferny Combes* — a Devonshire Guide-Book which no Devonshire traveller should be without— "depend upon it it is no waste of time to learn how to understand and enjoy anything in nature. All these beautiful forms cannot have been placed before us for no object. When sorrow and the petty annoyances of life harass us, to turn to the pure enjoyments of nature may afford us comfort and relief: and, perhaps, in years to come, when lying weary and in suffering on an invalid's couch,

we may be glad to turn to beauties of which we think but little now, and then may learn their use."

Wherefore, O friend of mine—if ever friend of mine chance to look at these rambling pages —when you go next to beautiful Exmoor, strive with all your heart to learn the full meaning of the great nature chorus which is ever pealing over those solitary hill summits.

You may gather a practical life-lesson from every blade of grass and every lifeless stone: and should you chance to be bowed earthward by the weight of worldly care, and want, and sorrow, these nature-chants, hitherto unnoticed and unknown, will surely find an echo and and an abiding place,—

> Will point thee forward to a distant light,
> Will seem to lift the burthen from thy heart."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIVER BARLE.

One could not give a friend, who was desirous of seeing and knowing Exmoor thoroughly, better advice than to follow the course of the river Barle from its rise to its termination. It is essentially a moorland stream: it is born, and flourishes, and ceases to be, within sound, if not within sight, of the crested moor.

Its source is in a large and dangerous morass called Mole's Chamber, beneath the heights of Showlesborough Castle: thence it flows due east till it reaches the pretty hamlet of Simonsbath. Afterwards it takes a south-easterly course through the most characteristic part of the barren moor, till it gets into woodlands and enclosures near the village of

Hannart Min.

SIMONSBATH: EXMOOR.

Withypool. From this point it loses its attractions for the thorough-going moorland fisherman, who abhors the slightest approach to a copse or a tree in any form, and loves open water, and a light breeze, and a clear sky, with all his heart.

But if the fisherman would here be inclined to retrace his steps, the wandering artist would wander on with increasing pleasure; for now the river flows through a pleasant meadow-land between endless woods of silvery beech and gnarled oak, whose overhanging boughs interlace as they roof the glittering water with their swaying feathery arches.

Here is a long still reach of cool green water, broken only by the sullen plunge of the biggest of trouts, who has just risen out of his lair under that hollow bank, and has captured the juiciest of caterpillars for his luncheon, and is now gone back to his solitude and his digestion.

Here is a rippling descent, a stair of foaming rapids, its broken waters chequered with ten thousand broken lights from the swaying interstices of the overhanging trees—trees, O fisher friend, which will certainly captivate your whirling line as well as your artistic eye; which will probably impair your well-kept temper, and will without doubt utterly ruin your well-made "collar." At the end a sudden glare of sunlight on a flashing fall; and, right underneath, a jet-black pool fringed with green wreaths of tangled moss, and white wreaths of whirling foam-bubbles, seething with angry hidden eddies, and doubtlessly inhabited by the King of the Barle, who is old enough to know that he is out of the way of mischief, and well-fed enough to stay there—in spite of the cunningest of piscatorial allurements.

So we may go on for ever and for ever—that is to say, as a matter of fact, as far as Exbridge, no great way below Dulverton,

where the Barle and the Exe coalesce, and whenceforth the united stream carries down to the sea the name of the latter river.

If the Barle be viewed strictly and simply from a fisherman's stand-point, it may be said that in spite of all its drawbacks it can hold its own as the most satisfactory trout-stream in the North of Devon.

Its drawbacks are these. It is nine miles from Lynton, twenty from Ilfracombe, and goodness knows how many from any other place in the world. The fish though numerous are not large, and are not yellow-bellied and pink-fleshed as they ought to be—and as the fish are in the neighbouring Badgeworthy and Oare waters.

But its peculiar advantages more than overbalance its defects, except in the eyes of a man who only cares about the size and flavour of his day's catch, and with such a man one ought to have no sympathy, nor should one

desire his companionship on the moor or elsewhere. Its chief advantages are that it presents a fair stretch on end of six or seven miles of open water: that it is fordable in sundry places and crossable by means of divers bridges and cattle-gates: that the bogs which occasionally margin it are not dangerous or deep: that its fish are numerous and vigorous: that it leads a fisherman through the very heart of the most characteristic forest scenery: and last, though not least, that within the aforesaid limits there are three several places at which a man may put up, and be lodged in all cleanliness and comfort.

Such lodgings are Mr. Robert Holcombe's refreshment-house at Simonsbath, which is close to the river, and possesses two beds, and two tickets for the Barle, Badgeworthy, and Oare waters: the "Red Deer" Inn, above mentioned, two miles to the south-east of Simonsbath, where tickets for the Barle may

also be procured: and the Inn at Withypool (where the woodlands begin), the cleanest and most comfortable of old-fashioned country-inns in the world.

So that on the whole the river Barle and its belongings are very much to be recommended to wandering fisherman, and wandering artist, and wandering folk of all kinds who are desirous of knowing what moorland scenery is like, and are inclined to prefer the wild nature of the forest to the tame art of a fashionable watering-place.

The Badgery (Badgeworthy) and Oare waters though smaller than the Barle are both full of pink-fleshed, yellow-bellied trout, both present a fair quantity of open moor, and are both accessible from Simonsbath: which, on the whole, is the best head-quarters for the fisherman.

But in the course of this small excursus on the merits of the king of the Exmoor streams

I have quite forgotten my diary: and must now post up our last day's proceedings on the moor.

I start from Withypool, sending the pony by the road to Simonsbath, and proceed to fish the river diligently up to that latter place, whence to-morrow morning I am to return to Lynton, in order to get once more on the cliff-road to the west.

Withypool is a pretty village of grey cottages, built on a slight eminence which rises out of fertile fields and green woods. On its southern side is the river, which here widens into a broad and shallow stream, and is crossed by a picturesque bridge of many arches. Lower down is a little weir, over which the waters tumble day and night with a pleasant murmuring, and below are one or two noble pools: and then the woods close in—and there is an end to all agreeable fishing at once. So after a few casts in the pools aforesaid, I

walk steadily up stream by a river-side path which leads through a mile of fields and wood, and finally emerges on the open moor at Blackapit, which is a deep sullen pool under overhanging banks at a sharp turn of the river.

There may be then a half-mile of shallow still water, with trees on the opposite bank: and then one or two exceedingly moist bogs, and then comes Landacre (*vulgo* Laneker) Bridge —a massive and rather imposing-looking structure, of grey stone, standing out in a solitary and defiant manner in the midst of the wild moor.

Here I recross the river and fish onwards up a lovely reach of deep water, till we arrive at the hedge of which I wrote in the last chapter, which is the boundary of the Forest, and a curiosity in its way.

Imagine a primitive barrier composed of peat-turf, some six feet wide at its base and

some eight feet high, grass-grown on either side and patched here and there with facings of grey slate set edgewise: on the top of this rampart grows a tremendous hedge of beech *trees*, ten or fifteen feet high, spreading on both sides as they rise, and affording capital shelter below for cattle and sheep in stormy weather, and above for the birds who have nothing better to harbour in on the Forest. Innumerable blackbirds seem to frequent this particular hedge, and I have once or twice driven black-game from its rustling shelter.

Being now in the Forest of which I have written so much already I must add but little more. But we go happily on and onwards, catching fish, and getting very wet, with much success. Now we are among a series of deep and prolific pools; now we are passing Ring Castle and its neighbouring heights; and now we come to the confluence of a little tributary with the Barle, which I have surnamed the

Luncheon Stream, from the fact that on its banks, by some strange force of circumstances, I have usually found myself taking that needful refreshment, which is never so simple or so agreeable elsewhere.

Hereabouts, as I sat happily on a smooth stone and contemplated things in general before proceeding on our upward route, I jotted down by way of memorial a list of the neighbouring "things" which I had seen.

The hillsides are covered with the young yellow-green fronds of the Bracken, which is just beginning to unroll its sturdy feathers. Among the out-cropping rocks by the river is the Lady Fern, and the sweet-scented Mountain Fern, and countless spires of the tall and stately Fox-glove.

In the short grass, which grows everywhere on the moor, is white Bed-straw, and yellow Trefoil, and Tormentils, and Buttercups. By the side of the river are quantities of the

beautiful *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, and the shining triple leaflets of the Bog-bean, and sapphire-blue Forget-me-nots, and the golden-yellow Spear-wort, and the white plumes of the Cotton-grass, and countless other "things" about which I might go on writing till to-morrow morning.

Then there is the brown marsh butterfly, and the May-fly (which is a June fly on the moor), and the soldier-fly, and white moths galore when night falls. And overhead I have seen or heard more birds than one would fancy could ever be found in so treeless a region. There are sandpipers flittering about the streams, and the cuckoo calling from the hillsides, and the larks singing their very hearts out in the higher air. And I have seen the white sea-gull floating overhead like a white cloud, and started the moor-cock from his perch, and "heard the curlew call" with that weird unhappy note of his, which makes

one think it must be the cry of some lost spirit, condemned for ever to wander and to want amid these far-off solitudes. By the way, the natives call the curlew the "Horn-wig," which reminiscence altogether spoils the little romance in which I have just indulged.

And now having finished these observations and notes, we set off again up the stream, Sharp following sedately at my heels—a safe position which he has adopted ever since he was lately entangled by my whirling line and pricked by the sharp hook, at a time when he thought himself in perfect security on the top of a neighbouring bank. The day begins to wane, and the fish which have been provokingly indifferent for the last hour or two, begin to rise freely again.

Now we pass the deserted works of a copper mine, where the blackened timbers and scattered mounds of charred slag contrast grimly with the green turf and gay flowers and silvery water.

Now the hills draw nearer the stream and begin to be covered with scattered plantations of oak and larch. And presently I see among the trees the bell-gable of the new Church at Simonsbath, and know that my ramble is near its close.

Finally, as the day ends, I put up my rod and count my fish, under the old Bridge which crosses the river just opposite to the village, and of which I manage to secure a sketch in the failing light.

And then we walk through a ferny lane and underneath the darkness of great elms, and presently emerge into the midst of a cluster of white cottages, set in a lovely frame of richly wooded hills, with a foreground of darkling moor and glittering water.

This is Simonsbath: and here we get our well-earned supper and a quiet night's rest, and so peacefully end our pleasant wanderings over the moor and on the Forest.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM LYNTON TO COMBMARTIN.

A day of rest here intervenes, occupied solely in an early plunge into Simon's "bath" (which is a large and very deep pool above the old Bridge), and a leisurely ride to Lynton, by the road which I have previously described.

Next morning we set out on foot for Combmartin.

We pass through the Valley of Rocks, and shortly afterwards arrive at a modern building of very heterogeneous and questionable architecture, which my Guide-Book informs me is called Lee Abbey, and which, fortunately for one's time and temper, is not a show-place. So we pass it by and presently get a glimpse of Duty Point, chiefly noticeable for its abrupt

precipice, and its legend, which is fully related in the Hand-Book aforesaid.

Now we climb a steep hill, and are presently embowered in the soft shadow of green foliage, catching from time to time delicious glimpses, beneath the overhanging branches, of the blue sea so far below.

This is Woodabay: the path winds through the woods, nestles in the woods, and finally emerges far above the woods on a windy down, where the little Church and village of Trentishoe cower under the crest of the hill—small shelter one would think in the bleak winter-time, when the snow-flakes drift heavily

"And the stormy winds do blow."

Then there is a long descent which finally lands us at the door of the "Hunter's" Inn, situated in a deep and luxuriantly wooded ravine on the banks of the little stream which runs down from Parracombe.

Hence a narrow rounded valley descends at right angles to the sea, its sides are lined and wreathed with oak and larch plantations, and it is divided by the swift-running stream, whose clear waters are half-hidden by swaying fern and luxuriant coppice.

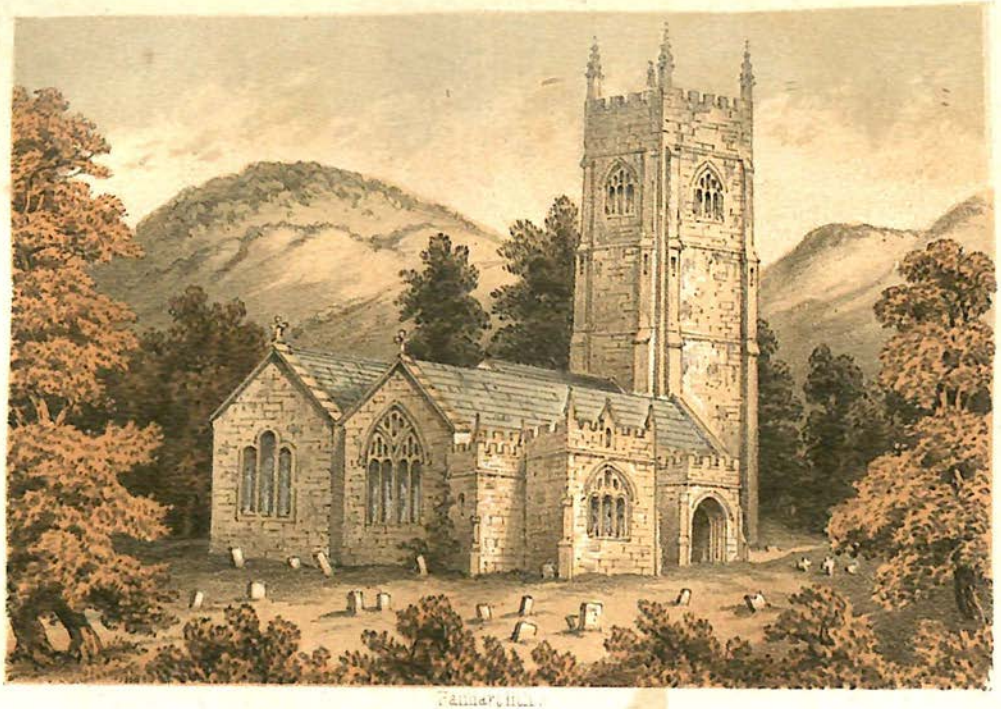
And half-a-mile from the sea the stream widens and frees itself from its shady retirement, as though it would have one last long look at the joyful sun before it takes its final plunge into the unknown ocean-water. The woods, too, dwindle into straggling masses of stunted undergrowth, and then disappear. The hill-side is a cataract of fallen, falling stones, and tangled withering grass. Then comes the sheer scarp of the cliff, and then the welcome roar of the rolling sea.

So we arrive at Heddon's-Mouth. After a while we wander back through the valley, and by and bye find ourselves among the woods again, clambering up the steepest and stoniest

hill in Devonshire: and at the top is the little Church of Martinhoe, with its white cross glittering above the newly-built chancel. Further on are the bleak heights of Trentishoe Down, where one seems suddenly to have got back to the moor again. And at last we descend, amid an ever-shifting panorama of hill and valley and sea, upon the exceedingly original village of Combmartin.

This is what I saw of Combmartin:—first a long straight interminable valley, stretching far away out of sight in either direction; then a long straight road, courageously running right through this terrible valley; and lastly a long straight village, planted uncompromisingly on either side of the straight road, and apparently extending from the edge of the moor to the verge of the sea.

We turned aside for a time during our downward progress, for I wanted to examine and sketch the Church, which possesses a fine



St. PETER'S: COMBMARTIN.

tower of four stages, and is, externally, one of the most picturesque buildings of its class and date in the district. Internally, it is chiefly remarkable for an elaborate screen and parclose of Third-pointed wood-work: the parclose is in fair preservation; but the screen is greatly mutilated, and is crowned with a whitewashed plaster-cornice,—on some of its lower panels the painted figures of saints in monastic dresses are still visible. The Chancel has been lately restored under the care, and as I was told at the expense, of the present Rector: the new reredos is especially commendable, and the whole aspect of the Sacrarium presents a marked contrast to the rest of the interior, and must certainly suggest to the parishioners the notion of following the good example which has been set them, and of carrying out through the whole Church the work which has been so well begun.

Having finished my drawing of the north

view of the exterior of the Church, we proceed on our walk through the village. It is certainly endless: first a row of cottages, then an open space of field or garden, then a group of cottages, then a farm-yard, then apparently country, pure and simple, then more rows of cottages, more groups, more gardens, more farms, and more cottages, and so on for ever, till one comes suddenly upon a grey pier and a shingly bay, with a little schooner, at anchor, in the tideway; and, beyond, the clear blue water of the mid-channel; and furthest of all, the misty outline of the far-off Welsh hills.

To the westward are Newberry Rocks, jutting masses of limestone, in the midst of fine coast scenery: westward again is a pretty inlet, wooded to the water's edge, called Sandabay.

To the east are the striking sea-washed hills of Little Hangman, Great Hangman, and

Holdstone Down. Between the two latter is a deep ravine called Sheerycombe, intersected by a small stream, which takes its leave of the combe by plunging down a sheer descent of some fifty or sixty feet, and during high tides must fall into the sea. At the base of this cascade, and on several other beaches along this part of the coast, the Sea-fern *(Asplenium marinum)* may still be found. The Maiden-hair has been almost eradicated by dealers and tourists, and the Sea-fern will probably soon share the same fate.

It is obvious that the above-named rambles cannot be executed in one day, and that in consequence I stayed at Combmartin longer than I had intended to do, allured by fine weather and the exceeding beauty of the neighbouring cliff-scenery, which I am told is but little visited by North Devon visitors.

During my sojourn I put up at an Inn which is popularly known as the Pack of

Cards, from its extreme likeness to the house which any child knows how to construct of such materials.

One does not usually meet with much amusement at such rural resting-places, chiefly because the natives are not inclined to be communicative, and also because one is usually worn out with one's day's work and is glad of an after-dinner nap and an early bed.

But it so happened that I did extract a little amusement and information from the frequenters of the Pack of Cards, after my second day's supper at that establishment.

The little sitting-room in which I was "located" was not a too cheerful apartment, and was, moreover, somewhat chilly, and the Inn literature was soon exhausted, and Sharp was fast asleep, and I consequently felt inclined to be dull and to wish for any society than my own.

So I strolled out, and finally wandered into

the kitchen of the Inn, which was apparently used as the village tap-room, and which was then inhabited by about a dozen men, labourers and miners apparently, who were smoking long pipes and drinking rather muddy-looking beer out of pint-cups of white crockeryware.

They took but little notice of my appearance, and when I sat down in a corner of the tall settle and lit my pipe, they seemed to consider me in the light of one of the company and went on talking, I may say—shouting, to one another as before.

But the conversation being conducted in the broadest of Devonshire dialect was not over comprehensible to a stranger, so, having broken the ice by offering to "stand" something all round, I ventured to suggest that a little music would be an agreeable change. This proposition, which was unanimously approved of, elicited more amusement than I had anticipated—and less melody.

There appears to be a prescribed course of operations on such occasions, with which no singer is allowed to dispense. The programme —as far as my experience goes—is invariably the following.

The performer being called on by name, takes no notice whatever of the request, but gapes into vacancy with a stolid and blank expression of countenance; at the same time the company take no further notice of the performer, but converse loudly and appear to have totally forgotten the petition which they have preferred. In a few minutes however the intended singer becomes violently and even alarmingly agitated: he pushes his mug of beer far from him, dashes his fingers through his hair, plants his knuckles on the table, thrusts his forehead foreward and tucks his chin into his waistcoat, and in this disadvantageous position commences his song—quite suddenly and without any preface. As

suddenly the company become silent and attentive, and so continue, except during chorus-time, till the last note is well over. Then the performer convulsively drags his mug towards him, raps thrice on the table, and in an ordinary conversational tone of voice mildly mentions the title of his song. Finally he takes a deep drink, and composes his face into an expression of the blankest ignorance of the loud applause which ensues.

The songs were many and various. A smart-looking young farmer, who had evidently seen something of the world outside Combmartin, gave us "Mary of Argyle" and "Red, White, and Blue." This was followed by a song of some forty verses in length, quite in the style of the sensation novels of the day, with the subjoined plot. One Paul Johnson, who appears to have been "a jolly pirate," comes in the course of his rovings upon a young lady who, in a state of extreme dishabille, is

being tied by her hair to the ground by a gang of eight robbers. P. J. immediately advances to the rescue like a valourous soldier of fortune as he is, and promptly slays six of the band. In the next verse he is slain himself, in an obviously incoherent manner, by the young lady whom he has released. After this, one is not surprised to hear that the afflicted parents of the damsel come and "see the sad sight," nor that they incontinently take a ship to Portsmouth "and cross the raging main": which, with the addition of "Paul Johnson"—conversationally spoken, concludes the story.

Then there was another narrative of a young person who was greatly troubled

> "Concerning of her own true love
> That ploughed the raging main."

She sets out upon her travels, and is of course utterly unsuccesful

> "In searching of a young man
> Which Johnny is his name."

At length, having returned home, she is one evening accosted by a stranger who is not as civil to her as he ought to be: she indignantly replies

"If Johnny was here this night
He'd keep me from all harm,
But he's on the field of battle
All in his uniform."

The stranger promptly answers in a barbarous and unfeeling manner that he was personally acquainted with the aforesaid Johnny, whom he left in a moribund condition a short while ago in foreign parts:

"And when she heard him say so
She fell in deep despair,
In wringing of her tender hands
And tearing of her hair."

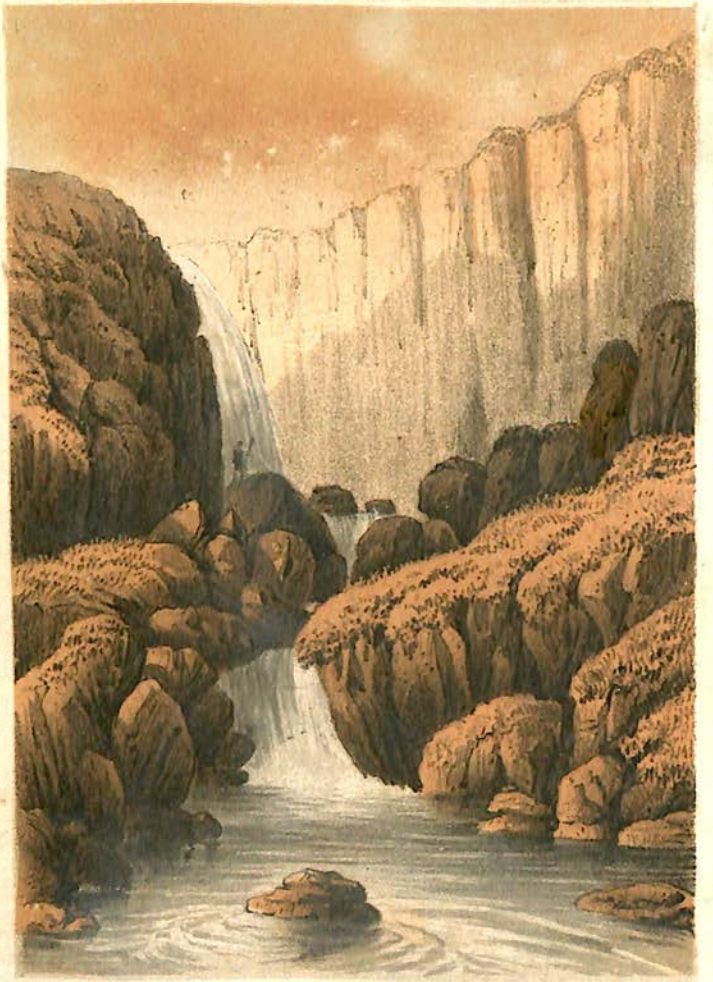
Of course the story ends happily by the stranger throwing off his disguise: and then he takes the distressed maiden in his arms, and

"Says he, I am that young man
Which you thought was slain,
But here we meet in Combmartin
All free from grief and pain."

Many other performances of a like nature ensued and were all vigorously applauded.

By and bye, in a pause of the musical entertainment, a burly-looking personage enters, who wears a rough pilot coat, and has a jovial expression of face, and is deferentially saluted by the company as "Cap'n Jack," and turns out to be the captain of a mine which has been recently opened in the neighbourhood. He seats himself on the settle by my side, and we are speedily in conversation. He is affable and intelligent, and gives me an immense amount of statistical information on the subject of mines and miners, all of which I am afraid I have forgotten.

At last however I contrive to edge in the topic of folk-lore, and ask him if there are any ghost-stories, or superstitions, or quaint customs peculiar to Combmartin and its neighbourhood. He shakes his head at first and appears disinclined to continue the conversa-



Hanhart. lith.

MILFORD WATERFALLS, HARTLAND.

tion, but at length being hardly pressed, and finding that the company in general are engaged in their own talk, and are not attending to us, he turns to me confidentially, and in a low voice pours out a series of "true" legends, which I here put down, perhaps more in my language than in his, but without adding to or diminishing from the facts which he related.

The Squire's Ghost.

You may have noticed a little lane, beyond the Church, which leads from the village to the downs above. If not, ask anybody to-morrow to show you "Usticke Lane."

At the angle formed by this lane and the main road is a plot of ground which was once occupied by a large and handsome building, called the Mansion House.

When I speak of it one Squire Usticke lived there, as his fathers had lived there before him, and a jolly rollicking sort of life

he lived there you may be sure. At last he died, as I suppose his fathers had died before him; and preparations were made for a grand funeral, and a great gathering of relations and neighbours took place at the Mansion to do honour to the mournful occasion.

It was the custom then, as it is now, to make the funeral cortege as numerous as possible, since the estimation and rank of the deceased was supposed to be indicated by the number of those who followed him to the grave. Consequently the entire party joined the procession, and every retainer was pressed into the ranks, one servant only (whose name, Jane Bullock, is till remembered in the village) remaining at home to cook "the funeral baked meats" for the mourners on their return.

Whether Mrs. Bullock was worn out with her culinary exertions, or prostrated with grief, or overawed by her lonely condition in the now deserted house, is uncertain: at all events

after a while she left the scene of her labours, and after roaming for a time from room to room wandered into her late master's sitting-room, and finally settled herself down in a meditative and melancholy position in that deceased gentleman's peculiar arm-chair.

Scarcely had she done so when, terrible to relate, the bodily form of the owner himself stood before her, and in a stern and uncompromising tone of voice bade her immediately "get out of that, and go and mind her work."

At this juncture of affairs the funeral party return, after having decorously deposited their poor friend in his family vault.

They mount the stairs, and the foremost group enters the room—only to leave it with the promptest celerity, and with confused shouts of horror and alarm.

For they have stumbled over the prostrate body of unfortunate Mrs. Bullock, who has swooned away in the midst of her terror: and

they have seen Squire Usticke himself, whom they have so lately interred, sitting in his own arm-chair and smoking his pipe by his own fireside.

After this you will not be surprised to hear that the Squire continued to evince his dislike to the parish Churchyard, and that even to this day he may be seen on cloudy nights wandering about the site of his departed Mansion, and smoking his lonely pipe in the dark lane which still goes by his name.

The Fiddler's Ghost.

Not many years ago an old man was living in the village who possessed a fiddle and was able to discourse merry music upon it. There was a large upstair-room in his house which was called the dancing-chamber, and here the boys and maidens of Combmartin used to assemble once a month, and dance, and talk, and flirt in their honest country fashion, and

otherwise enjoy themselves after their day's work.

When the fiddler was dead his daughter married, and she and her husband continued to live in the old man's house. But as the husband could not play the fiddle the dancing-chamber was of no use, and it was consequently converted to ordinary domestic purposes.

The alterations had scarcely been completed when the house became suddenly uninhabitable. Every night the most fearful noises rang from floor to roof—noises as though a score of horses were galloping up and down the old dancing-chamber, to the accompaniment of the loud cracking of whips and other similar unnatural sounds.

So that, as you may suppose, the family got but scanty rest at night; and were nearly driven to their wits end by fright and perplexity.

At last the husband betook himself to the

Parson of the parish, and asked for advice and assistance in so disagreeable a state of affairs.

The Parson suggested that such kinds of alarming noises were frequently caused by rats, and counselled him to procure the services of an expert in the killing of such unpleasant vermin.

In about a week the man again paid a visit to the Rectory, evidently wrought up to a pitch of desperation by his broken sleep and troubled dreams.

"It was no rats," he said; they had hunted in vain for such things: it was "a spirit"—whose, he couldn't tell, but there was no doubt that it was a real spirit; and the only thing to be done was to have it laid by the Parson. If, he added, it should be too strong for one Parson he hoped the Rector would be good enough to get two other clergymen to join him, for he had been assured that there

was no spirit so powerful as to be able to stand out against the united powers of three Parsons.

The Rector, however, declined to revive the old custom of exorcism; and consequently his parishioner went home with a troubled and an angry heart.

A few days afterwards he came back once more, with a gleeful countenance, and said that the spirit was laid, and that he himself had been able to effect the desired result.

Partly swayed by the absolute necessity of doing something to penetrate the mystery, partly persuaded by the sensible exhortations of the Rector, he and his wife had instituted another thorough search in the haunted rooms; and after much ripping up of roof and floor and wainscot they discovered—an old silk waistcoat belonging to the deceased fiddler, snugly concealed in the thatch immediately above the dancing-chamber. In one of the

pockets of this garment were *two half-crowns.*

It became, therefore, immediately plain to them that the old man had been troubled at the loss which his family had sustained, through the concealment of his hoard; and that the above-mentioned noises were the unnecessarily-strong means which he had taken to draw his daughter's attention to the hidden treasure.

In proof of this opinion it happened that henceforward the disturbances totally ceased: and to this day, happily for the inhabitants of the cottage, the spirit has remained at rest.

The Last Lord of the Manor.

You must have noticed a group of large oaks on the south side of the churchyard. They are called the "Park Trees": and the neighbouring land is part of a farm which goes by the name of "Park."

This Park was once the "pleasaunce" of

the Lords of the Manor of Combmartin, and surrounded the ancient towers of Combmartin Castle.

The site of the old Castle is still visible in a meadow adjoining the Park trees, and takes the form of a large oval grass-grown bank, with a deep depression (the remains of the moat) on the east side. A short while ago the occupier of the farm noticed that the grass in his meadow was burnt up in one particular spot after long drought, and he consequently removed the turf. Underneath was a quantity of loose stone; and digging deeper, in the expectation of being able to work a limestone quarry, he came upon the outer wall of the Castle, with the foundations of the buttresses still perfect. Outside was a deep ditch wholly filled up with mud, which was quickly carted away to enrich the higher land of the farm.

The Manor, which was once of great extent, was sold by the last Lord to his steward, and

by him re-sold piecemeal to any purchaser who occured, and so to this day there are a great number of small land-owners at Combmartin, and to the Manor is left little but its name, its ruins, and the sad story which caused its dismemberment.

The last Lord of the Manor had an only and dearly beloved son, whose love of hunting was always leading him into the heart of Exmoor in pursuit of the red deer, which then abounded in that wild country.

One bright autumnal morning he rode away as usual at break of dawn, accompanied only by his hounds, and as he passed the Castle gates he told the ancient porter with a laugh to expect a good night's rest, for he was only going to the borders of the moor, and should be home long before nightfall.

But the evening closed in, and he did not come; night fell, and he did not come; hour after hour passed away, and he did not come.

At length it was supposed that at the end of his day's hunting he had found himself far from home, and (as he had often done before) had taken shelter for the night elsewhere.

So the porter raised the draw-bridge, and barred the Castle gates.

Just then the moon sank behind the hills, and black windy clouds began to roll up from over the sea.

An hour later the young man rode rapidly down the hill-side into the valley, his hounds lagging wearily behind: he neared the Castle, which, when he was within a stone's-throw of it, was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness: still he pushed rapidly along the well known road: at last his horse stopped with a sudden frightened motion, he spurred him angrily—there was a leap forward in the darkness—a sullen plash—a shrill scream and a hoarse cry—and then profound silence, as

the black waters of the moat closed round their victims.

The broken-hearted father sold the estate, and wandered away—to die before long in a foreign land: and so the Manor was dismembered and the Castle became a heap of ruins.

"This isn't a ghost-story, then?" I said, as my informant paused in his narrative.

"I don't quite know," he answered with a laugh, "there's more than one old woman in Combmartin who won't go down the road past the Park Trees after nightfall, even now. But what they see is more than I have been able to find out."

"I suppose a shadowy form rides by on a spectre-horse," I replied in a low voice, "and a pack of gaunt and fiery-eyed hounds follow, and there are unearthy shouts and the blasts of a ghostly horn as the weird train sweeps by and disappears in the gloom of the neighbouring Churchyard; and if that isn't enough

to frighten all the old women in Combmartin, I don't know what is."

"Like enough," he said with a grim chuckle: and then, after another pause, "now I've got one more story to tell you, and that isn't a ghost-story at all, though it sounds like one for it is called

Hunting the Earl of Rone.

"Rone?" said I: "is that a Devonshire name? I don't remember to have heard of it before in my travels."

I believe, continued the Captain in effect, that the name is properly "Tyrone," and that the Earl of Tyrone, or a political refugee supposed in Combmartin to be such a personage, was captured by a detachment of soldiers in Lady's Wood, near this village, during the times of the Irish Rebellion. The legend goes that he had been wandering in the neighbourhood for some time before his capture,

and had lived on a string of sea-biscuits which he had hung round his neck, and which he had procured from the little vessel which landed him on the North Devon coast.

I am not, however, going to tell you the story of his wanderings in the woods, or of his capture, but of the strange annual commemoration thereof which the Combmartin people instituted, and which they kept up with great regularity till the year 1837, when the ceremonial was finally abolished.

The "show" took place yearly on Ascension Day, and the characters or mummers who played in it were the following.

The Earl of Rone: wearing a grotesque mask, a smock-frock stuffed or padded with straw, and a string of twelve hard sea-biscuits round his neck. The Hobby-Horse: masked and covered with gaily painted trappings, and armed with an instrument called a "mapper," which was shaped to represent the mouth of

a horse, and was furnished with rude teeth and the means of rapidly opening and closing its formidable jaws. The Fool: also masked and gaudily dressed. A (real) Donkey: decorated with flowers and a necklace of twelve sea-biscuits. A troop of Grenadiers, armed with guns, and wearing tall caps of coloured paper profusely adorned with bunches of ribands.

During the fortnight which preceded Ascension Day the Hobby-Horse and the Fool, in full dress, paraded the parish and levied contributions to defray the cost of the dresses and the other expenses of the show.

On the morning of the day itself great numbers of people thronged in from the surrounding parishes, and the whole village turned out in its Sunday garments and put on its liveliest aspect.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the Grenadiers marched with all due pomp and

circumstance of war to the neighbouring plantation called Lady's Wood, and after much parade of search, discover the fugitive Earl of Rone ineffectually hidden in the low brush-wood.

They immediately fire a volley, lay hold of their prisoner, set him on the Donkey with his face towards the animal's tail, and thus conduct him in triumph to the village.

Here the Hobby-Horse and the Fool, and great numbers of the inhabitants, join in the procession.

At certain stations in the village the Grenadiers fire a volley, when the Earl falls from his Donkey apparently mortally wounded. Hereupon there is great exultation on the part of the soldiers, and excessive lamentation on the part of the Hobby-Horse and the Fool. After great exertion the latter invariably succeeds in healing the Earl of his wounds, and then the procession re-forms and marches onward once more.

At every public-house there is also a stoppage for purposes of refreshment, and as there are many such houses of call in Combmartin the progress of the mummers is necessarily slow.

Moreover there are further innumerable delays, caused by the perpetual efforts of the performers to levy additional contributions from the visitors who throng the street. As a general rule small sums are given readily, for in case of refusal the Fool dips the besom which he carries in the nearest gutter and plentifully besprinkles the rash recusant, and should not this hint be promptly taken the Hobby-Horse proceeds to lay hold of the victim's clothes with his "mapper," and thus detains his prisoner till the required black-mail is forthcoming.

About night-fall the procession reaches the sea; and the proceedings are thus brought to a close.

The Captain's budget of local stories was here exhausted, but he added a few quaint superstitions which he said were prevalent in the North of Devon, and which I may as well subjoin.

Overlooking.

It sometimes happens that a farmer is unlucky with his stock. A number of his likeliest bullocks or sheep die, one after the other, without any more assignable reason than colds, coughs, and the weather.

In such a case he firmly believes that his beasts have been "overlooked" by some envious neighbour, or reputed witch, who possesses the diabolical power of the evil eye.

Accordingly he avails himself of a remedy which is believed to be not only strictly local but also entirely efficacious.

He removes the heart from one of the deceased bullocks, or sheep, as the case may

be, and goes out into the nearest wood and cuts down a bush of the biggest and oldest Blackthorn which he can find.

He then picks off all the longest and most prickly of the spines of the Thorn, and proceeds to insert them pin-fashion into his bullock's heart, until his novel pincushion can hold no more.

Finally he hangs his handiwork to the iron bar which crosses his kitchen chimney, a few feet above the fire: and so long as it hangs there in safety he is assured that no evil eye, whether of envious neighbour, or of malignant witch, will have any power over him, his household, or his possessions.

Domestic Medicine.

To cure a tumour, steal a piece of raw meat, "strike" the affected part with it, and bury it in an unfrequented place. As the meat decays so will the tumour disappear.

To cure a chronic disease of the skin, it is only necessary to wait for the next fatal wreck, and then to "strike" the seat of the eruption with the hand of the first drowned mariner who is washed ashore.

To cure a child of the King's evil, take it to a wise woman, the seventh daughter of a seventh child, and let her "strike" it three times in succession when the moon is at the full: no other remedy should be used during this course of treatment, and no pay is expected until the cure is effected.

Here my informant concluded somewhat abruptly, as the clock struck twelve and warned all sober-minded people of the need of silence and sleep.

I also came to a conclusion, of this kind—that it would be well worth while to make a collection of the folk-lore of even so small a district as that of North Devon. Such a

collection should be made at once—for many of the old stories are fast dying out, and the old superstitions receive but small credit except from the very old or uneducated. The collected facts might be arranged under the heads of Historical Romances, Ghost-stories, and Superstitions—social and medical. The result might be compared with similar collections, and illustrated by the history and topography of the district.

And if the work answered no other ends it would give us no small insight into the ways of thought of our ancestors, and suggest a comparison between them and ourselves.

We should perhaps be led to enquire whether our superior education and enlightenment have entirely destroyed the mode of thought which was formerly prevalent; and, if not, what are the beliefs or superstitions which have now taken the place of the folk-lore of olden days. And if such a course led us to investigate the

proofs of some of the popular creeds and so-called sciences of the present day, (Spiritualism, Hydropathy, and the like, for example,) we should probably be none the worse, mentally or bodily, for our labours or our scepticism.

CHAPTER X.

BERRYNARBOR AND WATERMOUTH.

We are all, I suppose, subject to erratic periods of existence. There are times when our thoughts suddenly quit their accustomed channels, and we feel inclined to adopt any new pursuit, or any new theory—simply because it possesses novelty. And there are days, even in the midst of a pleasant summer-holiday, when we are unaccountably compelled to exchange highways for byways; when a public parade, or a noisy railway station, or a respectable hotel, becomes a nuisance and an abomination, and we long for a desert, a mountain peak, a hovel, or any place or thing which is unaccustomed and unknown.

Such a day, to me, was the one on which I

left Combmartin for the short walk which was to take me to the neighbouring town of Ilfracombe. In the due course of the ordinary and rational walk to the latter place we arrived at the bottom of a very steep hill, enclosed on either side by very tall hedges: there was no wind, and the weather was sultry in the extreme. Sharp and I halted by common consent, surveyed the hill and each other—and then were respectively mastered by that feeling which I have described.

We break through a hedge, scramble down a declivity, get out on the sea-shore, wander under the base of the cliffs, climb up a steep and slippery ravine, find ourselves on a down, in a lane, in all manner of fields. Then we pass through a farm-yard, where Sharp has a passage of arms with a sheep dog (a somewhat harmless-looking puppy with those peculiar glazy-white eyes which one only sees, so far as I know, in animals of his kind) wherein my

friend is not victorious, and returns in a dejected state of mind and tail. By and bye I see a distant Church tower, and, steering towards it across country, am presently contemplating a pretty village, scattered about on wooded and undulating hills, with a winding valley far below, threaded by a small stream, and evidently terminating shortly on the neighbouring sea-shore.

This is Berrynarbor, famous, if for nothing else, for being the birthplace of the celebrated Bishop Jewel. I heard a pleasant story of a Devonshire farmer concerning the good Bishop. He was asked if he knew the place (an ancient farm-house in the parish, called Bowden) where the Bishop was born: he answered that he knew it well, and added quite simply and as a matter of course—that, he never entered its door without taking off his hat, as a mark of his respect for the memory of such a worthy and learned man.

Berrynarbor Church stands picturesquely on the hill side, and possesses a noticeable Tower and Lych-gate. Externally it is in a good state of preservation, thanks to the care of the late Rector: but internally it is greatly in need of renovation, and there is one pew, or rather enclosure, which boasts a fire-place, a little library, sundry arm-chairs and other like domestic appliances, and which is happily quite a curiosity in these days of universal restoration and reverent care for the House of God.

Following the course of the valley we come to a park-like expanse of meadow and plantation, intersected by a small stream in which the trout are freely rising. Presently the view changes, and the streamlet falls into a tiny inlet of the sea which is nearly land-locked by the surrounding hills and projecting rocks. Above this creek rises Watermouth Castle, a modernized castellated building, by no means unimposing or unpicturesque in its

general aspect. I naturally begin to opine that I should have no objection to live in so fair a scene with a rental of a few thousands a year, and appeal to Sharp—who has his eye on a neighbouring rabbit and does not condescend to reply to such an unpractical observation.

Some sea-coast caves in the neighbourhood of the Castle are worth an inspection, and one of them is particularly remarkable since its jet-black sides and roof form a frame to a sunny view of Combmartin Bay, with the broken and many-coloured crags of Holdstone and the Hangmans in the distance of the picture.

We proceed along the cliff-path towards Ilfracombe, and by and bye come to the jutting rocks of Rillage Point. Not far off are more caves, and the beach in their vicinity is strewn with rounded boulders of fossil madrepore.

Presently we pass, as rapidly as possible,

through the straggling hamlet of Hele, which appears to be chiefly mark-worthy for its absence of ordinary drainage and for the perpendicular gardens of its inhabitants.

The large conical hill on the right hand, scarped seaward by a well-remembered avalanche of rock and debris, is called Hillsborough. And Hillsborough is plainly "Hele's-burrow." Moreover since "burrow" signifies a fortified place or stronghold, one is not astonished to find the remains of earthworks on the summit of the hill.

From this eminence I get a first view of Ilfracombe which, bepraised as the place and neighbourhood has been, did not disappoint me. It struck me as being that kind of view which an artist would involuntarily remember and paint from memory years after he had seen it.

There was a bright foreground of grassy cliff and shining sea: this in the clear sunlight

Hanhart lith.

ILFRACOMBE FROM HILLSBOROUCH.

was full of detail, every blade of grass, every fern-frond, every wave-ripple, being clear and distinct in its definition. In the middle distance lay the Town and Harbour: the former wandering about hill-sides in a few white terraces, and in many irregular lines and masses of variously built and coloured houses, the latter a calm sea-inlet guarded by a projecting streak of pointed rock, which is crowned by the relics of an ancient Chapel—so bleared and greyed by time and weather as to seem an integral part of the massive foundation from which it sprung. In the further distance was the jagged outline of the Seven Torrs, which rise, step-like, peak above peak in fair gradation of height and beauty: and crowning all clomb up the blunted summit of the great Slade Down, purple in its deep and massive shadows, golden in the delicate margining line which sharply cut the blue expanse of the clear summer sky.

One could need no more beautiful or promising an outlook than that which I have so faintly described; and I came down from my lofty perch with a hopeful heart and full intention of doing justice in future rambles to the fair prospect which lay before me.

CHAPTER XI.

ILFRACOMBE.

There are two distinctive types of our national institution, the Watering-Place.

One is a collection of infinite series of badly built terraces, rows, and cresents, and endless groups of semi-detached villas, white-stuccoed houses, lodges, and boxes—each in its sandy enclosure of stunted shrubbery or wind-ravaged garden. To which is attached a street or two of fifth-rate shops; half-a-dozen Churches and Chapels with third-rate fashionable preachers belonging; two Libraries of last season's literary failures; a dozen flourishing medical men whose practice and skill are in inverse ratio; an esplanade where one gets drenched at high water, and contemplates at low water an

expanse of evil-scented mud; a stand of over-worked skeleton donkeys; and a brass band whose tuneless performances make one long for an early death, either in the neighbouring mud-coloured ocean, or at the hands of the nearest and most successful of the watering-place's competing doctors.

The other is a patch of a dozen cottages, close to a sandy bay, some twenty miles distant from the nearest railway station. Six of the cottages let lodgings, which are of so minute a kind that one is usually compelled to sleep with one's head on a window-sill and one's heels protruding from the open door of the cupboard which is, by one's landlady, dignified with the name of Bedroom. There is a shop where you may buy anything you do *not* want, from a tallow candle to a coil of rope. There is a Church, or, perhaps, a dissenting Chapel—five miles off. There is no Library, no band, no carriage to be hired, no

donkey-stand. Moreover there is nothing to do when you are there, and no apparent means of getting away when you wish yourself (as you speedily do) anywhere else.

My first impression of Ilfracombe was a favourable one, inasmuch as it became clear at once that the place could not be said to belong to either of the above-named types. It is not sufficiently developed to be classed with the first, and it is sufficiently frequented and flourishing to be far removed from the second.

It is not that horrible abomination which short-sighted advertisers call openly "a first-class Watering-Place": nor is it that no less unpleasant residence a mere fishing village, dedicated to dirt, the dismals, and decayed lobster-pots.

My second impression was one of a perplexing nature. It seemed difficult to account for the great and increasing popularity of the place, especially with those visitors who come

simply as sea-side visitors, and without any thought of being pleased by the facility for the study of natural history which the place affords. For the town seemed to lack so many of the usual attributes of a fashionable watering-place. There were no discoverable sands. There were no rows of terraces bordering on a well-worn esplanade. The town apparently consisted of an irregularly-built street wandering up an inland valley. The houses were scattered about the hills in all kinds of situations, and many of them had but the faintest apology for a sea-view. I was told, too, that there were no fashionable "Preachers"; and no large staff of medical men, since, in truth, the doctors that were were not usually troubled with too many patients.

Why then is Ilfracombe popular, and in the summer time populous? was the question which I asked myself in some perplexity.

My third impression of the place seemed to suggest the answer. People in general like Ilfracombe because it *is* different from most other summer sea-side haunts: because it has no esplanade, or reach of sand, where everybody must of necessity walk up and down if they walk anywhere; because there is a wide sea-side walk at some distance from the lodging-houses, for those who like to enjoy sea-air and sunshine without fatigue; because there are innumerable walks in all directions for those who like walks and do not care to meet "everybody" in such proceedings; because one needn't always wear fine clothes, but may ramble about over damp rocks or dry cliffs unobserved and not unobservant; because from the very configuration of the ground it is one of those rare places which man cannot utterly mar, however much he may try and has tried so to do—the houses must be built in detached groups and in irregular lines, roads

and paths must serpentine and rise and fall, and even the most rectangularly-minded of architects and land-surveyors cannot ruin the picturesque by straightness and regularity; because the climate is not one of extremes, for it is never too hot in summer, and rarely too cold in winter—the grass is green, and sheltered trees and shrubs grow, and flowers bloom even at Christmas-time as they do not in colder districts; because the ground is dry and the air moist, and one's body and mind are therefore invigorated and braced without being chilled and withered as they are in less genial latitudes; because, in fine, there is more freedom and more health to be enjoyed here than in most other resorts of the kind.

At which conclusion I arrived after much talk with sundry inhabitants, visitors and residents; after a too brief stay in the town; and after a series of pleasant rambles in the neighbourhood.

Of the things to be seen in and about Ilfracombe itself, a few notes must now be made.

The harbour, though small and adapted only for small craft, is picturesque, owing mainly to its surroundings: on the south side a wooded hill rises abruptly, crowned with rows and groups of white houses, opposite is the jagged outline of Lantern-hill above mentioned, with the desecrated Chapel of S. Nicholas on its summit, in front the bold mass of Hillsborough with its buttresses of sharp black rocks running far out into the white foam of the blue sea.

Touching this harbour I heard an exciting and a sad story from an inhabitant who was himself an eye-witness of the scene. It may be entitled

The Doomed Man.

"On the first of November, 1859, at three o'clock in the morning, a fearful gale of wind

was blowing from the south'ard and west'ard along the north coast of Devonshire. At that early hour (said the narrator) I was awakened by a sudden fall of rattling hailstones, and as I raised the window-blind to look out at the weather a double flash of steely-blue lightning blazed out against the darkness, in the shape of a fiery Y—the stem of the letter represented by a falling ball of fire as the two streams of light coalesced. Then a sharp and angry roar of thunder instantly ensued, and was muffled by the voice and whirl of the rising gale.

"Sleep was out of the question: it seemed doubtful whether any house-roof or any house would remain standing till morning: so I dressed myself, revived the embers of the fire, and sat as patiently as might be till welcome daylight should arrive.

"At dawn I set out and found my way to the sea. It wanted two hours of the ebb, and wind and tide setting together drove before

them heavy crested Atlantic rollers of immense length, following each other at wide intervals, and breaking over black rock and jutting headland in blinding cataracts of water and spray.

"Towards eight o'clock I reached the harbour. It was full of vessels and in a state of the direst confusion. Warps were cracking like tow, spars snapping in all directions, ships grinding and crashing together. Now there is a sudden cry of 'man overboard!' and a small boat is seen floating bottom-upwards, and its crew (presently saved) are struggling in the heaving water.

"At the end of the pier is a strange and exciting sight. There the opposition of wind and tide causes a vast eddy, or as it is technically called 'a run' of the sea, which sweeps in and out of the harbour, after the manner of the Severn 'Bore,' at intervals of about two minutes. Two large schooners have broken

loose from their moorings, and being temporarily secured by long warps are executing the wildest and most erratic of movements in the midst of the great swirl of waters. One of them is a trim-built smartly-painted Dutchman, the other a dingy-looking Cornishman. On the top of the 'run' they sweep out of the harbour together, and by and bye, checked by their warps and the turn of the eddy, they pause—and then roll in again together, and repeat the same proceeding with countless variations endlessly. Now the Dutchman takes a short run at the Cornishman's quarter, and away go bulwarks and deck-planking with a vicious crash; presently the Cornishman returns the compliment by an onslaught on the Dutchman's bows, and a wide breach is made in that well-kept craft, the debris of which sails up and down in the eddy alongside of the unwilling combatants: by and bye the bowsprit of one of the vessels falls foul of the

pier-head, and stones are flying and spars crashing, and the shouts of the bewildered sailors and terrified landsmen rise up clearly above the raging of the sea and the roaring of the gale.

"At this juncture a look-out man signals a vessel in sight and making for the harbour.

"Immediately the long-boats are manned with all available strength, and pull slowly out towards the Point to be in readiness to help the stranger.

"At the same time there is a great rush of people, idlers, superannuated seamen, and the like, to the top of Lantern-hill whence the coming vessel, and her entrance into the harbour, may be clearly discerned. I, too, climb the hill with the rest, making head as well as I can against the violence of the wind, which seems sometimes to die away altogether for a single half-second, and then as suddenly wakes up to life and deals a man a sledge-

hammer stroke full in his bare face, and buffets him roundly—staggering as he is, and does not leave him till he is clinging tooth and nail to the wiry grass and slippery stones, and has given up all hope of ever getting under the lee of the grey walls of S. Nicholas' Chapel.

"So, at last, we arrive at the summit.

"'There she comes!' cries a tall grey-haired mariner, in a weather-beaten tone of voice, tremulous with age and excitement.

"She was a small schooner of about one hundred tons, carrying a reefed storm-jib, close-reefed fore-topsail and main-staysail.

"'There's two men a'board of her—no—there's three," shouted another old salt, adding 'her deck's as dry as a mer's* back: she's the right sort for this sort 'o work, she is.'

"'Do you think she'll make the harbour?' I asked at the top of my voice.

"'Don't know, sir,' he shouted in reply,

* "Mer" is the local name for a Guillemot.

'she may: and she mayn't: its a terrible sea.'

"And so it was: every crested roller threatened to sweep the deck of the vessel, and to clear her of crew and rigging. Still she held on gallantly, lifting lightly with every wave, and being plainly under perfect control.

"'Its her only chance to keep close in to the Point,' cried another spectator, watching her breathlessly as she crept in closer and closer still.

"At last, on the top of a roller, she rounded the Point within a stone's-throw of its black rocks.

"'Well done!" shouted the men about me in sudden and unanimous chorus, 'he's a brave sailor, whoever he is. Now let her hold on, and she'll do."

"But she was carrying no sail aft, for her main-boom was broken, and therefore as soon as she came up in the wind she began of course to drift to leeward—at first slowly and almost imperceptibly.

"Then she let go her anchor.

"It would not hold: and still she drifted.

"'Now for the hobblers, and the town-warp: there's no time to lose,' broke out from the excited bystanders.

"The long-boats began to pull hard for the vessel: but we could see they were without the usual line to which the harbour warp is attached.

"'Where's the town-warp?' shouted a sailor with a volley of fierce expletives.

"'They'm all in use,' said another.

"'No they're not,' cried a third, 'there's a new one never touched on the pier, and there's another on Warphouse Point.'

"*Which was actually the case.*

"And now the leading long-boat rested on its oars, fearing evidently to encounter the heavy sea running at the harbour mouth.

"Still the schooner drifted to leeward more and more helplessly, and more and more rapidly.

"At last the second long-boat seemed to gather courage, and pulled out, nearing the vessel, which by this time was no great distance from the bristling rocks and the hungry breakers.

"'They must take the men out of her and let her go,' cried a spectator, 'its all they can do now.'

"And so the hobblers thought. They are under the schooner's quarter: one of her crew is lowered safely into the boat; the second plunges desperately into the sea and is picked up; the third, who is the Captain, stands for a moment irresolutely, then dives down the companion for an instant, and reappears on deck carrying his strong box of money and ship's-papers in his hand.

"But he is too late.

"The long-boat and the schooner have parted company, the one no longer being able to live in the increasing surge of the breakers,

the other drifting hopelessly near and nearer the deadly shore.

"Here the excitement and shocking interest of the drama became almost unbearable.

"For the long-boats pulled slowly back into the harbour: and the doomed man went his solitary way on his last voyage.

"He, evidently, saw at once that death was inevitable, that now he must die—in the full vigour of his life, in cheerful brightening daylight, before the eyes of multitudes of his fellowmen, who were too powerless—too careful of self, perhaps,—to save him.

"He is running frantically up and down the deck of the drifting vessel, raising his arms from time to time above his head, in mute signal of appeal and agony and despair.

"'Where's the life-boat?' cried a big sailor on the hill in a choking voice.

"'Where she always is,' said another with a bitter sneer, 'high and dry—and a man drowning for want of her.'

"'Where are the rockets and life-line?' asked another.

"'There they go,' was a bystander's reply, pointing to a cart and a group of men on the path to the top of Hillsborough, 'they might have saved the vessel and her men from Warphouse Point: they might as well now be at the bottom of the sea for all the good they can do up there.'

"Nearer and nearer to the fatal rocks drifted the schooner and the doomed man.

"Presently she grounded heavily and a great sea washed over her: then the undertow carried her off into deep water, and she was swept like a cork eastward under the beetling cliffs.

"Strong men around me turned pale, with a strange feeling of sickness in their throats; children cried; and a woman ran wildly about on the hill screaming and tossing her bare arms.

"Now the vessel drifted into a shallow bay.

"'He may save himself now; its a beach of shingle; there's hope yet.'

"But with a sudden swirl the current carried her out again, and she was swept on towards the last point of projecting rock: her instant destruction seemed inevitable.

"Here the Captain performed an act of seamanship which if cool courage and activity were to be of avail would have saved his life. Single-handed as he was he managed to brace round his foretopsail, and, though the rudder was rendered useless when she last struck, she answered at once to this new influence, and in a minute's time had cleared the promontory and was standing well out in the open sea.

"A universal shout broke forth: cries of 'Well-done!' 'He's something like a sailor!' 'He's a brave man!' 'He's saved!' 'Thank God!' burst from every throat and every heart.

"But the act which had saved the vessel

from the rocks had set her broadside to the rollers, and to be saved she must still hold on her present course for a while, for were she now to run before the wind again she would surely strike on the next point to the eastward.

"She laboured heavily. Was she water-logged?

"A great sea swept over her—another—and another.

"Hope began to die out again.

"Then one mighty roller heaved up its massive volume of translucent foam-streaked water, and buried her from stem to stern.

"When it was gone, 'Can any one see him now?' I shouted.

"'That's him' cried a sailor, 'there! by the foremast.'

"'No! No!' said another, 'that's the shreds of the foresail.'

"As we gazed, vainly striving to make out any definite form amidst the chaos of blinding

water and drifting spray, again and again the heavy seas broke over her: she rolled over on her side: her stern began to sink.

"She sank very slowly.

"Her hull is gone: her masts: her top-masts.

"—One can see nothing, now, but the bright daylight gleaming on the regular march of those cruel crested Atlantic rollers."

As the story was being told me I was sitting with the narrator on the very spot whence he had seen the tragedy: the day was calm and sunny, the little harbour a sheet of silver, under the scarp of Hillsborough the wavelets lapped lazily on the worn shingle, which they did not disturb with their quiet caresses.

"The giant is asleep," I said to my companion when he had concluded, "some day he will wake again. When he wakes is there anything to prevent a recurrence of the same

kind of death as that of which you have just told me?"

"I do not know," he answered gravely, "it may not be probable that such a catastrophe will occur again, but to me it seems at least possible that it will do so. The Life-boat has since been condemned as unsuited for this coast, and the name of Ilfracombe erased from the list of stations; and therefore she cannot now ever be a snare and a fatal mockery to the trusting sailor. But one cause of the evil which I have sketched still remains: there is still a divided authority here in matters maritime: the town-warps are under the command of the Harbour-master; the rockets and life-lines under that of the head of the coast-guard; the hobblers are, practically, their own masters.

"Consequently, in an urgent crisis, every man does that which is right in his own eyes, and plans may clash, or one power may wait

for another to act, and property may be lost and men may die as heretofore. There must be one responsible head, and one organized plan of work, here as elsewhere, if right is to be done and man's welfare secured."

"Then the system is to blame?" I said.

"A system is an abstraction," he answered grimly, "and cannot be responsible. They are to blame who make evil systems, and who can alter them to the saving of men's lives, and who will not do so."

After a pause, I said,

"This old building, under whose pleasant shelter we are sitting, was once a sailors' Chapel, was it not?"

"Yes," he replied shortly.

"And is there any substitute for it now?"

"There is a Bethel on the Quay, which, to me, does not seem an inviting place of worship —at all events externally: there is, too, a new district Church, which, as you know, is a place

Hanhart lith.

St NICOLAS' CHAPEL: ILFRACOMBE.

seldom frequented by sailors—at all events by such as are strangers to the parish."

"Could it not be possible," I asked, "to let things be here as they used to be: will not some good sailors' friend restore this old Temple to its former uses, restore it plainly indeed but in so catholic a spirit that men of all creeds may be induced to come here and pray for His protection 'who stilleth the raging of the sea,' and thank Him who preserved them when they cried to Him 'out of the deep'? might it not too be a place where in wintry boisterous weather wives and mothers and children may come and offer heartfelt and not unanswered supplications

'For those in peril on the sea'?"

"It would be a good and wise act," he answered, "were the old Chapel to be restored for such a purpose: and the restoration would dovetail as it were into my notion of re-organization in the matter of harbour authority, for

I hold that work and prayer may not be separated in this life, and that half of the misery and loss in the world springs from men neglecting the one and despising the other."

Our conversation here ended, and I strolled down the hill and continued my investigations.

By and bye I come to the new Church of which my friend spoke, and which bears every mark of having been well built from able designs. The stained glass in its Chancel windows is not beautiful, with the solitary exception of a north window, by Clayton and Bell, which is quite a study in the way of drawing and colour.

Close by are some new Schools, which are more than usually picturesque and successful: and a new dissenting Chapel, whose architecture is plainly of the "gingerbread-Gothic" sort, blocks up a road which might be continued throughout the valley with great advantage.

Here we turn aside and walk round the Parade, which seems to be the perfection of a sea walk, being dry and wide and airy, and sheltered in various parts from drift of rain and wind. Above, on the top of the Capstone (or Capstan) Hill, stand the signal staffs of the coastguard, and the Electric Telegraph Company.

From Wildersmouth we scramble under the base of the cliffs to the Tunnel beaches, where there appears to be every facility for bathing: the Ladies' Bathing Beach being especially sheltered, and furnished with a large artificial pool of salt-water, where, as the Guide-Book justly observes "the most timid may enjoy themselves at all seasons."

Passing through the Tunnels we emerge again into the valley of the Wilder, and climbing the hill which faces us, I pay a visit to the old parish Church, a substantial and massive looking building, which has been, and

still is being carefully and wisely restored, under the care of the present Vicar. The stained glass is the work of various well-known artists, and the central east window (one of Hardman's most happy efforts) is specially remarkable for its colouring and the "jewel-like" quality of its glass.

Afterwards we accomplish a successful ramble over the Torrs, which to my mind are by far the highest attraction which Ilfracombe has to offer. There is an undesirable toll exacted from all visitors, and the approach to the walks is not clean in damp weather, nor too agreeable in any weather. It would well repay any enterprising "Board of Health" to secure these walks to the public, and make the approaches as pleasant and easy as possible.

The Seven Hills themselves are charming: we scramble up and down endless paths amid golden furze-brakes, and rustling patches of fern, perch ourselves on view-commanding

hill-tops, wander down to the neighbouring beach paved with silvery-white quartz boulders: and, finally, from a rocky seat some three hundred feet above the sea-level, I watch the cloudless sun sink into the blue water.

So I return to mine Inn, prepared to maintain the supremacy of Ilfracombe against all comers. There are many other sea-side places of more notoriety and fashionable repute, but no other place where a plain traveller may so easily gain health, and indulge his love for nature — natural beauty and natural-history pursuits — with equal freedom and with like success.

CHAPTER XII.*

"CRUISING DOWN ALONG THE COAST."

People travel with infinitely various objects in view. Pater-familias to propitiate his wife, and enlarge the minds of his children. His wife to be able to "cap" her neighbour, Mrs. Robinson, when next she alludes, quite casually of course, to the Rigi or the Pyramids. Robinson because Smith travels. Smith to study the manners of many men. Jones to investigate the antiquities and art of their cities. Brown to find a rare snail, or complete his forthcoming monograph of the liverworts indigenous to Great Britain.

One's pleasure in travelling is greatly increased by meeting with travelling people who

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have an object either the same with or kindred to one's own; and I felt much delighted at discovering at my Inn a party of three men who had lately come down to Ilfracombe with the intention of investigating, each in his own peculiar line, the natural history of the district.

One of them is a Botanist, and intends to devote himself to the various forms of Fern which luxuriate in the shady combes, wave on the windy downs, or peer out of the chasms of the crumbling cliffs; nor will he neglect the Algæ, delicate in contour and gorgeous in colour which the sea will wash up for his inspection from her pathless depths. Another is great in birds; and can tell endless stories of the ways and means of

"Life on the ocean wave,"

which characterize the dippers and the divers and the rest of the multitudinous natatores. The third is a physiologist, and enunciates general laws for the general edification.

I am permitted to add myself to the congenial party, since I have some small knowledge of the habits and habitats of the endless lower life which lurks in the seeming deserts of dry rock and shining water.

In the case of each and all of us, however, science is subservient to the love of nature; the latter is our great end, the former a means to the end, and thereby it happens that if we be more or less superficial *quâ savans* we are none the less enthusiastic and enjoying *quâ* men.

On the morning after my general inspection of Ilfracombe we agreed to set off on a boat voyage, under the cliffs to the westward, touching here and there as, in the words of the old sea-song, we go

"Cruising down along the coast,"

and making Morte-Stone the great object of our expedition, since we expect to find sundry marine rarities in its unexplored chasms.

Shortly after daybreak we start from the wave-worn pier steps of the little harbour. The summer sun shines over the broken crags of Hillsborough and kindles with a natural fire the beacon on the Lantern-hill—concerning which Mr. Gosse remarks, with more of Protestantism than of piety, that "the ancient Chapel of S. Nicholas expiates its former days of Popish darkness by yielding a nightly light to the wandering mariner."

How the sea glistens and glimmers in the increasing glare—how lovingly it laps and curls in creamy wavelets round the grey rocks, tossing and tangling the sea-weed in the wantonness of its delight—how it seethes and dimples in the deep eddies and the jagged rock pools: and how freshly and freely the waters of the mid-channel rush, in the might of their full career, to mingle with the Atlantic swell when the next "flood" shall hurl in the crested squadrons of its advanced guard!

Three or four towing-nets are trailing from the stern of our boat: bottles, jars, chisels, hammers, and baskets lie in vast confusion under her thwarts; and now with many a pitch and tumble she rolls over the tide-eddy at the harbour mouth, and then

> "With a wet sheet, and a flowing sea,
> And a wind that follows fast,"

away we run to the westward, and leave the white terraces and dotted hill-houses, and all our cares and troubles, if we have any, far behind us.

As we shut out rock after rock of the rounded base of Capstone, our botanist suddenly loses that calm control which previously distinguished him; and rising, pipe in mouth, from his lair in the stern of the boat, descants long and eloquently on the nature-treasures of that isolated peak.

He tells us how in its remotest recesses, just above the line of the high spring-tides, he

has found the long, sturdy, glossy fronds of the sea-fern, *Asplenium marinum*, side by side with the crisp lilac sheaves of the cliff-loving *Statice spathulata*: how the white clusters and succulent leaves of the Scurvy-grass cling around the loose stones, and beautify, as nature ever does, the waste places of man's devising. Then among the sweet short herbage, he has discovered a whole colony of sturdy plantains, *Plantago lanceolata*, the "fighting-cocks" of our childhood; *Plantago coronopus*, the pretty "buck's-horn," with its coronet of deeply-cut leaflets; *Plantago major*, old Gerard's "Waybrede"—the German "Wegebreit"—the Danish "Verbred"—ingenious compounds, denoting at once the *habitat* of the plant and the characteristic of its leaf. Then, waxing warm with his subject, he pours out a torrent of botanico-barbaric nomenclature, and piles Pelion upon Ossa with remorseless facility: for he knows how

its rounded summit and its slippery sides are blazing with *Anthyllis vulneraria*, and *Lotus corniculatus*, and *Jasione montana*, and *Armeria* and *Silene maritima*, and *Spergularia rubra* and *marina*, and *Æthusa cynopium*,—till he is stopped by the inextinguishable laughter of the whole party, who are mutually bound in an offensive and defensive league, and incontinently capsize any one of their number who shows the smallest symptom of riding his hobby to death.

Further on we pass the grassy slope of Torr Point, above which the seven sister-hills heave their undulating crests, covered with purple heather and soft green moss and endless mazes of golden furze.

Then there are the beetling gloomy crags of Brandy-Cove, which can recount many a daring deed of bygone days, when smuggling was the heroic mode of getting one's livelihood, and preventive-men were legitimate targets for

country practice. How clamorously the great herring-gulls are shouting to us as we sweep by them! Wheeling in loftier and ever decreasing circles, they gather in a cloud in the high air, and hurl at us their short scornful laugh of secure defiance.

Now we are opening the quiet hamlet of Lee, embosomed in retiring hills and slopes of oak and cleves of fern and furze; and now, at last, the great object of our expedition is looming ahead of us.

The cliffs have been trending more and more sea-ward as we have been progressing, and now they suddenly make an abrupt curve and terminate in a sharp outstanding promontory—a ridge of grey, barren, weather-worn rock, which stands out among the wild wash of waters like the gigantic fossil backbone of some extinct antediluvian monster.

This is Morte Point: as we near it, and the tide recedes further and further, we see that a

low reef of broken rock runs out far into the sea, and terminates in three abrupt pinnacles.

The innermost, and largest of these, is the famous Morte Stone—so terrible and fatal a spot to the sailor when the winter night is black and cold, and the nor'west wind is blowing shrilly across the gusty Atlantic.

Beyond the Stone the reef still continues, but it is always covered by the unquiet sea, and a buoy far out among the breakers marks the termination of "the Race."

Between the Stone and the mainland there is an impassable gully, or "gût" as the Devonshire fishermen call it; and though the legends of the district tell us that in case of wreck the abyss has been crossed by the aid of planks and ropes, yet the rock is so far isolated and so hazardous to land at from sea, that we may safely claim to be the first party of naturalists who have ever invaded its unexplored recesses.

So with many a bump and a grind against the sharp rock peaks, as the swell rises and falls with mighty swirls, we scramble out and up with more or less success; and, planting our banner of naturalistic paraphernalia, take formal possession of the new land in the united names of their majesties—Nature, and Science.

Our success was certainly commensurate with our undertaking.

Innumerable polypes shot up in clusters and stars and spangles from the lower depths of the dark rock pools—sturdy Sertularias, nodding white and scarlet Tubularias, gladdening our eyes and enriching our vascula: shoals of huge "thick-skinned" anemones *(Actinia coriacea*)* unfolded their many-hued beauties on every rock-cleft, clinging pertinaciously to their anchorage in spite of the awful seas which roll over them in stormy weather: a lovely Corynactis, which is most rare on the

* *Bunodes crassicornis.*—Gosse.

North Devon coast, opened for our admiration a blossom of deep russet tentacles tipped with shining yellow globules, a blossom which unfolded from a soft and glistening rose-tinted bud: and chief of all, we found endless members and varieties of *Actinia aurora*, of which the only known North Devon habitats are Morte Stone and Lundy Island; beautiful indeed they are—now with tentacles of pearly white, now flushing into orange, now blossoming in delicate lilac and rose, now deepening into sombre russet and tawny olive.

So that we were more than amply rewarded for the labour we had undergone, and the risk we had incurred in remaining for some two hours on a reef where, at a few minutes' notice, a heavy ground sea will sometimes spring up, and render departure dangerous or impossible.

Having somewhat to set down concerning the last named anemones, I must omit all record of our homeward voyage, though we

did land in a sheltered bay to the westward of the Torrs and secure several fine specimens of the true maiden-hair *(Adiantum capillus-Veneris)*: and though we did entrap *Medusæ* numberless and "beautiful exceedingly" and countless myriads of the luminous *Noctiluca miliaris*—whose wonders almost tempt me to break my vows of reticence.

With regard then to these denizens of Morte Stone, which I have grouped together under the name of *Actinia aurora*, it must be noticed that Mr. Gosse has separated them into several distinct species. At another time I might be inclined to cavil at the numerous genera into which he has split up the genus Actinia: but I will now confine myself solely to questioning the propriety of erecting out of the many varieties of *A. aurora* the four species which he calls *Sagartia aurora*, *S. venusta*, *S. nivea*, and *S. rosea*.

To the first he gives eighty tentacles, to the

second and third two hundred or more, to the last about one hundred and twenty. He describes their respective peculiarities of colour, remarks justly that they are nearly of the same size and form, that they are found in company with each other, and that "*venusta* has close relations with *nivea*."

Now at various times and in various places I have found an entire colour-series of animals which have a common formal type of the following description: body from half an inch to one inch in diameter, opaque, conical, possessing sucking glands and emitting "white threads" bearing "spike-cases," tentacles about two hundred, graduated, erect, short, the outer row being smaller than the rest and everted over the rim of the disc. Of this formal type, there are the following varieties: I. *A. aurora.* (S. aurora, Gosse.) Body olive green, disc green spotted with white, tentacles orange. II. *A. aurora, var. subrufa.*

Body olive green, tentacles russet. III. *A. aurora, var. rosea.* (S. rosea, Gosse.) Body orange brown, tentacles rose colour. IV. *A. aurora, var. purpurea.* Body orange brown, tentacles lilac. V. *A. aurora, var. venusta.* (S. venusta, Gosse.) Body orange brown, disc orange, tentacles white. VI. *A. aurora, var. nivea.* (S. nivea, Gosse.) Body orange brown (pale), disc and tentacles white.

Dr. Latham, in his memoir on the varieties of the human species, defines a *species* as "a class of individuals each of which is hypothetically considered to be the descendant of the same protoplast, or of the same pair of protoplasts," a protoplast being "an organized individual capable—either singly or as one of a pair—of propagating individuals, itself having been propagated by no such previous individual or pair," and he adds that a *variety* is a class of individuals each belonging to the same species, but each differing from other indi-

viduals of the species in points wherein they agree amongst each other."

We have, then, in the above list a series of animals which agree in habit, in habitat, in form, and which differ only in colour. The question therefore arises whether a difference of colour alone is sufficient to justify the erection of a new species. In other words, is it probable that a white ancestral protoplast (of *A. nivea*) and a rose coloured ancestral protoplast (of *A. rosea*) were simultaneously created; or is it not more probable that from some one protoplast of the typical form the permanent varieties of colour were produced and continued?

Such is a bare outline of the conversation which ensued during and after our homeward cruise; and of whatever truth it may be possessed it is at any rate a fair example of the manner in which the humblest of observers and natural history lovers may do something to

forward the cause of knowledge, by investigating the isolated districts in the vast continent of the natural world, by working honestly and dispassionately and lovingly in the traces which larger intellects have left behind them.

For whilst our labours scarcely prove more than that a love of nature tends to foster a love of science, and that the love of science so begotten has a strong reactionary influence on the love of nature, it must not be forgotten that there is another and a higher class of minds who pursue the study of natural history from a simple love of science. They desire to unravel the great system of order, whose complicated net-work envelopes our outer world. They investigate the various phenomena of nature which are apparent to the eye, aided by instruments which extend its power in a twofold direction. They seek for unvarying sequences of cause and effect, and hence deduce natural "laws," dovetailing one in the other,

and resulting in that unity of design which matures a flower and controls a universe.

These are heroes whom no peril can deter—martyrs whom no persecution can destroy—everlasting beacon-lights on the road to the cloud-hidden temple of knowledge.

Nor are such words mere or enthusiastic verbiage. Who cannot recall the sight of Galileo immured in a dungeon, clad in sackcloth, bowing the power of his mighty mind before the force of the bigots of the Inquisition? or in his latter days, blind and deaf, and tortured by disease, yet, in spite of all his troubles, still "grappling with the material universe," and dying in his harness—dying, too, a prisoner in the grasp of that religious tyranny which disputed the martyr's right to a Christian burial? Think too of that narrow-minded strife and money-getting bitterness which drove Tycho Brahe from his sea-girt table-land of Huen,—from his Uraniberg "the

city of the heavens," his Stiernberg "the city of the stars," which checked him in the full career of his genius, and hurried him to his death, an exile, though an honoured one, in a foreign land. Think how nobly he worked in the great cause: how generously he aided those who toiled with like objects: how unhesitatingly he sacrificed health and life itself. Well indeed might he have the consolation of crying, as the vital tide ebbed for the last time, "*non frustra vixisse videor!*"

One may not seek to evoke and inspire such mighty spirits as these—they are heaven-born and do their work at a higher bidding; but we may strive to enforce on our fellow-men the conviction that, with but few exceptions, it is in the power of every intellect to follow in the track of these old pilgrims of science. Every mind may do something for the cause of science. Every mind can observe and reason, can wait, can learn, can love; and any

man if he be but content to concentrate his powers in the focus of a small field, may, before he pass away, be enabled to echo Tycho's dying cry, and take comfort in that he too has not lived in vain.

And if the student's courage ever fail him; if his heart wax faint as difficulties seem to grow and flourish in his path; if he ever, crying always with the dying Goethe for "more light," be tempted to think that a dawnless night is gathering around him, he may be encouraged by the persuasion that the science which is founded on the eternal rock of truth, must, too, be everlasting: he will surely be consoled by the noble and touching words of Augustin Thierry, which—a fitting epitaph—were recited by his friend Laboulaye over his open grave,

"Si j'avais à recommencer ma route, je prendrais celle qui m'a conduit où je suis. Aveugle et souffrant, sans espoir et sans relâche,

je puis rendre ce témoinage, qui de ma part ne sera pas suspect. Il y a au monde quelque chose qui vaut mieux que les jouissances matérielles, mieux que la fortune, mieux que la santé elle-même ; c'est le dévouement à la science."

CHAPTER XIII.

FOLK-LORE.

On the night after our return from Morte Stone, as our party sat after dinner chatting over the events of the day, I contrived to introduce, in a pause of the conversation, the subject of folk-lore: thinking that some of my companions, to whom Devonshire was not wholly new, might be able to add to the small stock of superstitions and legends which I had already gathered.

Nor was I disappointed, for my three friends (whom for convenience's sake I will here designate by the initials of "*A.B.*" "*C.D.*," and "*E.F.*") had several new facts to communicate; and I shall here set down a short sketch of the conversation which ensued.

A.B. "There is a quaint story already published in 'The North-Devon Hand-Book,' which is, I believe, founded on fact, although, to all appearance slightly improved in the telling: and I will read it, if you will allow me, as there are one or two additions and remarks which I can make concerning it. It is called

'The Legend of Chambercombe.'

"'Chambercombe is now a retired farm-house in a beautifully wooded valley, through which saunters the little streamlet which shortly afterwards empties itself into the sea at Hele Strand. The inhabitants could still show 'the haunted room' to the curious in such matters, a long low chamber in the roof of the house, from which the flooring has been removed, and which is now used only for the purpose of storing away useless lumber.

"'There are many versions of the legend

which belong to this house—the one which we shall give seems to have the merit of a quaint originality, and is sufficiently mysterious in its unexplained connection with former days.

"'Many years ago the burly ruddy-cheeked well-to-do yeoman, who owned this farm, was sitting under the shade of a tree in his garden, enjoying in the cool of the summer's evening his much-loved pipe of meditation and contentment. After a time he exhausted his usual subjects of reverie, the state of his crops, the rise or fall of wages, the prospects of the next Barnstaple fair. What should he do? he could not 'whistle for want of thought,' because of his pipe; he couldn't even indulge in the excitement of a matrimonial 'difference of opinion,' because his wife was gone into 'Combe, to sell her last batch of chickens. Whatever should he do? The evening was very still and calm, not even a breath of wind stirring in the copse on the hill-side, where the

last kiss of the sunset still lingered lovingly. He was just dropping off into a dose, and had nodded once or twice with much energy, to the imminent danger of his 'yard o' clay,' when it suddenly occured to him that he had forgotten to see about some necessary repairs in the roof of his house, and that his spouse had a better memory for such things than himself, and would not fail to remind him of the same on her return. So he roused himself, and facing his chair in the direction of the house, began to arrange in his mind the when and the where of his intended operations. The hole in the roof was over his wife's store-room, which accounted for her anxiety in the matter, and as he did not expect to be allowed to interfere with that sanctum, he settled that he would get at the roof from the next window, which opened into a passage and had a low parapet in front of it. Then he rubbed his eyes—certainly the passage was next to the

store-room, and the passage window was the only window with a parapet to it, and therefore the next window to the parapet must be the store-room window, and consequently must have the hole in the roof over it—ably argued, and very conclusive. But, to his great perplexity, the fact stared him in the face that the aforesaid hole was over the window which was *next but one* to the parapet. Then he counted the rooms of the house—'Our Sal's bed-room—passage—wife's store-room—own bed-room—one—two—three—four,'—next he counted the windows, 'one—two—three—four—*five*.'

"'There was one too many. He repeated the process, with the same result.

"'Between the passage and the store-room, which were next to each other, there was decidedly a window—the window too many.

"'If a window then a room—unanswerable logic!

"'Now thoroughly aroused, he dashed his

pipe to the ground with a vast exclamation, and rushed into the house at the top of his speed. It was the work of a moment to call together half-a-dozen able-bodied serving-men, to arm them and himself with divers spades and mattocks, and to scale the creaking stairs which led to the parapet window. There was no trace of a door; nothing but a flat white-washed wall—he sounded it with a hasty blow, and a dull hollow sound rang through the house.

"'Odswinderakins' roared the farmer, 'down wi mun boys! Virst o'ye thro' mun shall ha' Dame's apern vull o' zilver gerts* ! Gi' it mun, lads!' Clash went the mattocks into the cob wall,.cling clang rang the spades on the oak floor. A cloud of dust rolled through the staircase as the farmer's pick-axe went up to the head in the first breach, and the farmer's wife rushed up the stairs. Half-choked, and

* Groats.

wholly stunned by the din, she could get little information beyond a general statement that the 'goodger*' was in the house, which seemed self-evident. Another five minutes' work, and the farmer dashed through the gap, which barely admitted his burly person, followed by his wife, whose curiosity mastered her rage and fright.

"'And what did they see?

"'A low long room, hung with moth-eaten mouldering tapestry, whose every thread exhaled a moist rank odour of forgotten years, black festoons of ancient cobwebs in the rattling casement and round the carved work of the oaken cornice; carved-oak chairs and wardrobe and round table, black too, and rickety, and dust-covered, and worm-eaten; the white ashes of a wood fire on a cracked hearth-stone; and a bed—the embroidered hangings were drawn closely round the oaken

* The Devil.

posts and rustled shiveringly in the gust of fresh air which wandered round the room. 'Dra mun Jan, if thee be'est a mon,' whispered the Dame under her breath, looking round anxiously in the direction of the gap at which she had entered.

"'John screwed up all his courage, and with a desperate hand tore down the hangings on the side which was nearest the window.

"'In that dim half-light, for the night was closing in rapidly and the shadows falling heavily, they saw a white and grinning skull gazing grimly at them from the hollowed pillow, and one white and polished arm bone lying idly on the crimson quilt, and clutching the silken fringe with its crooked fingers.

"'The Dame swooned with a great cry, and her husband stunned and sickened, dashed to the casement, and swinging it back on its creaking hinges, leant out for the sake of a breath of pure air.

"'Horror of horrors! The garden was alive with ghastly forms: ill-shapen, unearthly, demon-like heads rose and fell with threatening gestures, and mopped and mowed at him from among the flowers of that quiet pleasance.

"'Hastily raising his fainting wife in his strong arms, he made his way as he best could through the welcome breach, nor did he rest that night till he had walled up and secured, for a future generation, the terrors of 'the haunted room.''

"Not long ago (continued the reader) I was told by a gentleman now living in Ilfracombe, that some acquaintances of his were once lodging during the summer months in this same farm-house, and were constantly perplexed and even alarmed by the strange and inexplicable noises which they heard therein. Their rooms were on the ground floor, and the inhabitants of the house knew of no cellars or subterranean passages, and yet they constantly

heard men's voices and footsteps beneath their feet. Such sounds invariably proceeded in a certain direction across the room in which they sat, and died away suddenly at a certain spot. A favourite dog of these visitors was also greatly disturbed by these strange voices, used to trace them along the floor, barking and howling vehemently whenever they occured. And it was an uncomfortable fact that, at the time of such occurrences, neither the visitors or inhabitants were ever able to discover that any men were in the house, or even at work in the neighbourhood.

"Moreover, one day the visitors chanced to remark aloud, as they were standing in the yard before the house, upon one particular stone, which, not unlike a flat grave-stone, lay in the ground a short distance from the main wall of the building.

"The next morning the stone was gone, and the ground carefully smoothed over where it used to be.

"The same gentleman also told me that another acquaintance of his was once looking over the house, with a view to engaging lodgings, when, as he was leaning out of one of the windows which opened on the court-yard, a gruff voice suddenly sounded in his ears. He turned round rapidly, and saw a short foreign-looking man, with dark hair and bright eyes, who made a common-place remark on the 'queerness' of the old house, and then directed his attention to some object in the distant prospect.

"When he turned round once more to renew the conversation the man had vanished, and the residents of the house who came upstairs in a few minutes had, they said, neither heard or seen the strange intruder."

Myself. "It may be difficult to account for the legend which you have just read, but the stories which followed it would seem to have an easy and probable solution. We

know that in former days smuggling was carried on to a large extent in this remote district, and was, indeed, elevated to the dignity of an acknowledged and profitable trade. And no doubt a great number of so-called 'ghost-stories' attached to rambling farm-houses and old manor houses are connected with this fact."

C.D. "Yes. I have myself no doubt that this is the case. The residents in every such 'haunted' house were probably in friendly communication with the smugglers, if not themselves principals in the proceedings, and they would not hear or see as much as inquisitive visitors. And the smugglers no doubt manufactured terrifying apparitions and alarming noises for the purpose of driving away strangers and outsiders from the scene of their labours."

A.B. "Talking of alarming noises reminds me of another story in this book, which I

must read to you. I have taken some pains to verify it and can safely say that the noises which it records cannot be explained by any such natural theory, and that it is what it professes to be—a true and unvarnished account of a very recent occurrence in this neighbourhood.

"It may be called

'The Hand of ——?'

"'We must give, in connection with Ilfracombe, a spirit story, which, though it dates but a few years back, is well worthy of a place in these brief records.

"'We have it first-hand from the person to whom it happened—a man of much thought, caution, and discrimination, and one who would not be led away from the paths of reason by the promptings of a morbid imagination.

"'We give it nearly in his own words as

he related it to us by his own fireside one stormy autumnal night, as the clock was rapidly verging towards 'the small hours.'

"'I don't believe in ghosts (he began) any more than you do, and I never saw one that I know of; but, if you like, I will tell you what happened to me not very long ago, and if you can explain it in any way without referring to some unknown spiritual power, you will do me a great kindness.

"'Soon after we were married, my wife's father was lying upstairs dangerously ill. He was a very old man, and so crippled with rheumatism that latterly he had been able to get about only by the aid of a large stick, and even with this his movements were slow and painful. Shortly before the time of which I speak he had become much worse, and had taken to his bed, and was in the habit of using this stick, which stood by his bedside, by way of a summons, knocking thrice with it on the

footboard of his bed when he needed assistance. He seemed to be sinking rapidly, and for a week my wife and I sat up with him night after night, expecting hourly his last breath.

"'At length one evening he seemed to be better and easier; and as we were nearly worn out with watching and anxiety, we determined to go to bed in the room beneath that in which he lay, leaving a servant with him, with strict instructions to call us immediately in the event of his becoming worse.

"'So a little before twelve o'clock we went to bed, and to sleep.

"'I could not have been asleep above a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes at the most, when I was thoroughly aroused by three tremendous knocks, which rang through the stillness of the house urgently, unmistakeably. —I started up and cried to my wife 'What's that? Whatever can it be? Did you hear that awful knocking?' She was awoke, too,

and said 'Yes I heard it: it's my father knocking with his stick, he must be very ill, let us go upstairs and see what's the matter.'

"'So we hurried on some clothes, and hastened upstairs to the old man's bed-side as as quickly as possible.

"'A light was burning in the room; he was lying perfectly still and motionless, asleep, breathing quietly — the stick was in its accustomed place, and had evidently not been disturbed—the servant was awake and watching by his side—she said he had not moved since we left, and that she had heard no noise whatever. She had been with us for some time and was truthful and trustworthy, and I have no doubt whatever in my own mind, both from her previous character and from her manner at the time and when narrowly questioned afterwards, that she spoke the truth when she said that she had not fallen asleep at all, and had heard no noise of any description.

"'Sorely perplexed, yet willing to think that we had been disturbed by an unquiet dream, or the freaks of the storm outside, we left the room, and went to bed once more.

"'We had not laid our heads on the pillow before the same terrible noise rang through the house again, louder than before—the kind of noise, added the narrator, which you would make if now, in the dead of the night, you were to take this poker and knock with it against that door with your whole strength. Quite as loud, and distinct, and unmistakeable as that.

"'When it had ceased we both started out of bed, and without a word rushed again upstairs.

"'The light was burning in the room as before—the servant maid awake and watching—she had heard nothing—the stick was undisturbed—the old man was lying calmly and motionlessly in his bed: we bent over him—

the quiet breathing had ceased—*he was dead.*

"'And now, said our informant, as he slowly stirred the mouldering embers, I wish you would answer me one question,

"'What was it that knocked?'

"'A cold shiver crept involuntarily over the listener, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, as he made in a low voice the only reply which could be given,

"'I cannot tell you—GOD knows.'"

E.F. "You know that to be true, so far the existence of the original narrator, his ordinary credibility, and his belief in the facts of the story, make it true?"

A.B. "I do."

E.F. "Of course the theory occurs that the watcher, influenced by that morbid hankering after the production of horrors which is not rare in people of her class, produced the sounds and denied their production."

A.B. "Against which you must set the

narrators estimate of her character, conjoined with my estimate of his character."

E.F. "True. And then no other theory occurs at once to me."

A.B. "Since the facts, if granted, are wholly unaccountable for by any known natural laws?"

E.F. "Quite so. And since, moreover, a logical conclusion from such laws pronounces the knocking in question to be objectively impossible, I should like to withold my assent to the supposed facts until I had made a searching examination of all the people concerned in the story—when, possibly, I might be induced to believe that the knocking was *subjectively* true."

C.D. "You are not so great a sceptic in the matter as, from your ordinary mode of thought, I should have imagined you to be. But, by the way, I remember another local legend which will, I think, sorely perplex your

theory of the subjective truth of ghost-stories.

"If you like to have a name for it, you may call it

'The Stong Box.'

"No great while ago the Rector of a small country parish in the neighbourhood of Barnstaple was engaged in the good work of restoring the Chancel of his Church, which had fallen out of decent repair during previous years of indifference and quietism.

"One morning the workmen who were then removing the Chancel floor came to him in great triumph, with a small stone box in their hands, 'Here a be, Zur!' said they, 'Us allus sed az ow us ud vaind mun!'

After due examination of the relic, and much enquiry into the matter, the Rector pieced together the following story, which, it must be remembered, is still devoutly credited in the village in question.

"There was a certain young woman, a parishioner of the last Rector, who, though not without personal attractions, was without the orthodox sweetheart in which country maidens are wont to indulge. She was constantly twitted by her companions with this omission of hers, and one day, as she was just setting off on horseback to Barnstaple Fair, the jeering became so excessive that, in a passion, she said she would get a sweetheart at the Fair, even if it were 'the Gentleman-in-black' himself.

"So she rode away alone: and so she came back alone, not having succeeded in attaching to herself the requisite follower during the day.

"Just, however, as evening was closing in, and she was nearing her home, she was accosted by a tall, dark, good-looking stranger, with whom she fell into friendly conversation, and found him to be so agreeable that she speedily

invited him to mount her horse, and to conclude his remarks in her own house.

"After this the stranger demeaned himself as a recognised sweetheart would: he was constantly calling at her house, and speedily became the favourite subject of the village gossips, who all agreed that he was—no better than he should be, and, probably, a great deal worse.

"He had a strange habit of arriving about nightfall and of departing shortly before daybreak—which, naturally, scandalized the good people of the village; and at last it became a common thing for some of the more adventurous boys and maidens to assemble in a crowd before the windows of the house where he was, and to strive, vainly enough, to see what was going on inside the carefully closed shutters. But they had the satisfaction of hearing loud laughter and singing; and it was discovered that the unknown sweetheart had a

deep rich voice, and sang beautiful songs which had never been heard before—in North Devon.

"But the end of such improper proceedings was, of course, to be expected, and it finally came in a very unexpected manner.

"One fine morning the Parson of the parish received an urgent summons to come immediately to the house which had so long furnished a subject of conversation to its neighbours.

"On his arrival a strange scene presented itself.

"'The unknown' was not visible; but his unlucky lady-love, in a state of more or less dishabille, was seen to be jammed painfully and hopelessly between her bedstead and the wall; and no efforts, either her own or those of her friends, were powerful enough to extricate her from her novel pillory.

"She struggled: and the neighbours pulled: and the Parson pulled: but it was all in vain.

Neither she or the bedstead could be moved the sixteenth of an inch from their unpleasant proximity.

"At last, in answer to the repeated exhortations of the rector, she confessed that her sweetheart was indeed not nearly as good as he ought to be, and that she was no better than she should be, and that she was now reaping the consequences of the rash speech which she had once made.

"She knew, she added, that she must remain where she was till midnight, and that then her fatal sweetheart was to come and take her away. Still, she said, there was one hope left.

"If seven Parsons were to be gathered together in the room, and were to solemly 'say words' over her, she would be released, and her late companion would have no further power over her.

"But, as the Rector justly remarked, such a revelation was of no material use to her, for

in so thinly populated a neighbourhood it was simply impossible to gather seven Parsons within the specified time; and even if, by a stretch of her 'lover's' politeness, Dissenting Ministers were allowed to count, the number could not be made up by midnight.

"Messengers were, however, dispatched in all directions for the desired ecclesiastical aid, and meanwhile the strong secular arm of many an able-bodied neighbour vainly tried to remove the obdurate bedstead and the lamenting damsel from their magical contact.

"Day wore on, and the Parsons did not arrive: night came without them. Lights were lit in the chamber where the tragedy was so soon to be consummated, and the hours rolled on as slowly as they do when many people are congregated to see a sad and awful sight which no power of theirs can avert.

"At last, a very short while before the destined hour of midnight, a sudden thought

—a ray of hope—darted across the Rector's perturbed mind. Sternly calling for silence from the lamenting friends and neighbours of the unhappy woman, he solemly addressed the beguiling Spirit of darkness, and bade him answer.

"Immediately, in response, a faintly perceptible smell of brimstone was diffused throughout the room.

"Thus encouraged the Rector proceeded to exhort the source of the disagreeable odour, bidding him be ashamed of his persecution of a helpless woman, and asking that, at least, some further time of grace should be allowed her.

"But no sound was heard in reply—only a manifest increase of brimstone fumes showed that the Spirit was present, and lively, and determined to exact the terms of his bargain to the uttermost.

"Still, the Rector was not discouraged.

'Then,' he cried, seizing one of the candles, now almost burnt out, 'if you will not grant her such grace, you could not for very shame's sake refuse to release her and let her be—until this short candle be burnt out.'

"A sudden and awful concussion in the room and the immediate removal of the sulphurous smell betokened the Spirit's assent to this harmless proposal.

"Whereupon the Rector promptly blew the candle out, carried it away with him, and did not rest that night till he had secured it in a strong stone box, and buried it with his own hands, beneath the Chancel floor of his Church, where it remained thenceforth in perfect security, beyond the reach of the angry machinations of the baffled fiend."

Myself. "I hope, for the young woman's sake, the present Rector restored the box to its original position."

E.F. "I hope so, too."

"Talking of 'saying words' over people, in extremity either of mind or body, recalls a few quaint notions on that and like matters which I picked up the other day in the neighbourhood of Trentishoe and Martinhoe—one of the most out of the way districts in this part of the country, and whose isolation may be realized by help of the fact that a middle-aged man, living in the latter place, remembers the first appearance of a two-wheeled carriage or gig at the neighbouring village of Parracombe, when the whole of the country-side turned out in curiosity and wonder to look at the mechanical novelty.

"Thereabouts the belief in witch-craft still flourishes abundantly. Travelling 'medicine men' often make their rounds, and secure a sufficient livelihood by their professed power of relieving sufferers from the effects of the evil charms under which they labour. These professors administer potions, and enjoin on

their patients the repetition of spells, which, frequently, consist of verses taken out of the Psalms.

"An old woman, formerly *a schoolmistress*, continues to relieve tooth-ache, inflamed eyes, and other small ailments, by 'saying words' over her clients.

"Many other strange remedies are in vogue in this district.

"Not long ago a man was seen busily engaged in catching little trout in the stream which divides Martinhoe and Trentishoe parishes; he was asked why he took so much trouble about such small game, and answered that a neighbour's horse was ill, and that he was going to make it swallow seven of the little fishes whilst they were still alive, and that then it would be cured at once.

"An old woman, now living, wishing to cure a neighbour's child of an infantile complaint, carried it into the Churchyard, and led

it round and round one of the graves: when this plan did not succeed she next proceeded to administer to her unfortunate patient *a mouse pie.*

"And a certain miller who had a succession of illnesses and had lost many of his old customers, took it into his head that he was 'bewitched' by his predecessor in the business. Whereupon he lost no time in drawing blood from his enemy, as the only way to break the charm. This he accomplished by the somewhat rude expedient of knocking him down and making his nose bleed: and in consequence had to pay the penalty of his violence at the next Combmartin Petty Sessions.

"Perhaps the quaintest receipt of all, was that of a man who had a watch which went badly. Instead of placing it in the hands of the first peripatetic watch-maker who passed his way, he went out into the woods, caught an adder, and attempted to pull out one of its

fangs for the purpose of inserting it into the midst of his irregular time-piece, which he was assured would then go correctly. However, he was so badly bitten by the tormented animal that he had to relinquish his experiment—much, probably, to the advantage of his watch."

A.B. "I think I can match that recipe of yours—which is *almost* inimitable—with a notion of a certain farmer, who does not live any great distance from Ilfracombe.

"He owned a field which was over-run with Coltsfoot; and, on being condoled with upon the state of his land by a friend, calmly remarked that it was 'no odds,' since he knew how to get rid of the nuisance without any difficulty: he had only (he said) to kill three Tom-cats, and bury them in the middle of the field, '**brandis-wise.*'

* A brandis is a three-cornered iron stand for kettles, crocks, and the like.

"Which 'maxim' he proceeded to put into practice."

I here related the few similar instances of superstition which I have already recorded in my notes on Combmartin: and added the few legends and stories which are there set down.

A.B. "You will find in the 'North Devon Hand-Book' a number of small local superstitions, briefly catalogued, in connection with the neighbourhood of Ilfracombe: and, I dare say, many more might easily be added. One of such additions I happen to remember at this minute. In the last generation there was a certain overseer of the poor who bore the reputation of being a very hard man to those for whom he ought to have cared, and who was said to have applied the money which he received for them to his own uses. So, when he died, it was thought, that a part of his punishment was to be denied that rest which

is believed to be at all events not the privilege of the wicked. The medical man who had attended him in his last hours, was riding home on a dark night, when he was suddenly encountered by what was not at all unlike the appearance of that patient whom he had just left in a dying state. And on the following morning he was told that the man had died shortly after he had quitted the house.

"There is a lofty hill lying between Ilfracombe and Lee, whose sea-ward shoulder runs down with a sharp grass-covered descent to the verge of the tide. Here, at the end of the promontory, is a shingly beach which is still said to be haunted by the wicked overseer. He is believed to be condemned to remain there until he has made a strong and durable rope out of the beach shingle. And, even now, on dark and stormy winter nights, the belated labourer who is returning home by the windy cliff-road passes over the summit

of the Down with a feeling of dread at his heart; for in the pauses of the gale he can plainly hear the cries of the angry and tormented sinner, who is plying his impossible task between the beetling cliffs and the tossing sea."

E.F. "There is a somewhat similar story appertaining to Martinhoe, of which place I have already spoken. There the ghost of Sir Robert Chichester, of Croscombe in that parish, is supposed to be compelled (for his sins) to haunt the base of a perpendicular cliff on the sea-shore. He is condemned to weave traces out of the sand, which he is to affix to his carriage, and then drive the vehicle up the face of the crag, and through a narrow fissure in its summit, which is known by the name of Sir Robert's Road.

"The natives believe that they hear his voice of rage as he labours at his nightly task; and at other times they fancy that they see him

scouring the neighbouring common followed by a pack of eager hounds whose fiery tails gleam like will-o'-the wisps in the gathering darkness."

A.B. "Which are obviously the near relations of the Dartmoor 'wish-hounds,' and of certain similar 'hunting-dogs' which are well known in the legends of Wales."

Myself. "Well, I really think we have supped our full of diablerie—for this evening, at all events; and as we are going to make a long day's excursion to-morrow, I beg to wish all, with many thanks for your additions to my stock of Devonshire folk-lore, a very good night."

CHAPTER XIV.

LEE.

Every one to his taste. There are many lovely rambles and scrambles all around Ilfracombe, and divers opinions as to their relative merits: having accomplished them all, I prefer the Lee ramble to them all. But I do not desire to dogmatize, and will therefore merely put down some of the many grounds of my preference.

First, the rambler should be advised to eschew the regular road, whether carriage road or cliff road, and to begin (as Sharp and I began) by going down to the sea—at half-tide, or thereabouts—through the Tunnels. We scramble along under the sea-cliffs, till we come to some rude stairs, cut in the solid

rock, on the east side of Torr Point. These we ascend, and find ourselves in the Torr walks. We wind in and out of gleaming furze and fern thickets, ascending always, till we come to the summit, where, on a considerately-placed seat of rough-hewn rock I lie me down and contemplate. There is a bright glitter on the green sea, making it resemble a giant emerald in the sunshine. Far below the white-winged sea-gulls are hovering, like snow-flakes in colour and motion: a quiet wind rustles dreamily in the short dry grass of the hill-tops. It is a time and place, of all times and places, for careless thought and busy idleness.

But the day is wearing onwards, and our walk is before us. So I leave my lofty perch and wind among the hills westward, till we emerge on the cliff-road in Langleigh Open, and before long are standing on the broad smooth heights of Slade Down, some six hundred feet and more above our starting

point, the sea-level. A pair of huge glossy ravens sweep up from the lower cliffs, flap lazily along the Down, perch on a neighbouring hillock in a fearless and lordly manner, and then sail away over the Torrs, belling out their musical and melancholy note as they go. Eastward, whither they are flying, the view is "beautiful exceedingly," in the variety of its outline and in the varied atmospheric effects of its seemingly endless distance. Beyond the rugged Torrs is the scarp of Hillsborough, and the needle-point of Rillage, and the purple swell of the greater Hangman, and a misty roll of distant hills which must be out in the wild moorland country. Westward are the broken hills about Lee and Morthoe, not unlike the Torrs in their general form; and, far away beyond them, is the low line of Lundy —a black bar in the shining sea.

Having a general notion of the whereabouts of Lee, I descend to it across country;

and, beyond getting shouted at by occasional labourers, who, naturally, disapprove of my proceedings, without adventure.

Suddenly we seem to have fallen into a "happy valley." It is quite full of sunshine, and flowers, and bird music. I lie me down, in a ferny nook, and bask. A little brook tinkles on with a wild dreamy song of its own: a cool sea-wind wanders about in the endless hill-side woods: bright-winged butterflies hover about among the waving corn-fields which are all a-blaze with reddest poppies and deepest blue corn-flowers.

Presently, resuming my rambles, I stumble upon as pretty a picture as one could wish to see—the village Church and School, side by side, in all their bravery of renovated architecture, with glistening bell-gable, and shining tracery, and whitest crosses, set like an antique cameo against a coloured back-ground of waving tree, and climbing rose, and trailing ivy.

Hannart, lith.

LEE, ILFRACOMBE.

The School-room is alive with the hum of busy children, who are none the less busy because their abode is bright with cheerful colour in roof and wall and window; and because the fresh air and pure light stream in plentifully from the scented summer-sky. Then, I enter the Church, whose decent order is doubly refreshing after divers experiences in divers other country places of luxuriant mildew and unchecked decay. There is a pleasant contrast of blackest anciently-carved wood-work against the bright walls and windows of the fabric; and, eastward, is a tiny Chancel, filled with stained glass and radiant with colour. On the whole, I conclude that this, and some similar sights which I have lately encountered, are successful expositions of the material side of the "good news of God," and are cheering "signs of the times"—a times which no longer keeps the best it has to itself, but has learnt how to give, and

to Whom its choicest offerings should be dedicated.

Wandering downwards to the sea I come upon a transverse valley, densely clothed with oak and furze coppices, and which is a striking, though miniature likeness of the far-famed "Vale of S. John." Further on is a large oak-wood (Wrinkle Wood the natives call it—perhaps because wrinkles, or periwinkles, do *not* grow there) which is full of pleasant shade and of the sweet-scented fern *Lastrea oreopteris*, and which in the spring time is a blaze of delicate white wood-anemones.

Beyond again is a shelving beach, a quaint water-mill, with its humming wheel besprinkling the salt-water pools fringed with streamers of greenest ulva; and beyond again a wide reach of azure sea, on which the full round moon makes a long rippling track of burnished gold—a shining "path of glory"—before I set out upon my homeward way.

CHAPTER XV.

MORTHOE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

There is a carriage road from Ilfracombe to Morthoe which climbs the wooded valley of Score, and crosses a bleak table-land, of no particular interest, until the traveller is within gunshot of the village of "Morte." But the pedestrian will do better to take the cliff-path to Lee, at which place the choice of two ways lies before him. Either he may follow the ordinary cart-road, or he may make a road for himself round the margin of the cliffs. In the first case he will pass through several truly Devonshire farm-yards, of which the first is called Damage, and is notable for having been the birthplace of Johannes de Rupecissa (*vulgo* John Cutcliffe) in 1340. Of him Prince

records that he began life as a Friar Minor, but being "very studious of and extraordinarily learned in the Holy Scriptures" he eventually became an advocate of the doctrines of the Reformation, and the last that is known of him is that he was cited before the Pope at Avignon to answer for his supposed heretical opinions, and was there cast into prison.

Beyond Damage are two other Bartons, which all possess the same features of lonely security, and were no doubt admirable fortresses in the good old days, when every man's hand was against every other man's hand, and when every man (if he could) did what was right in his own eyes and wrong in the eyes of the victims of his rapacity.

By this road the distance from Lee strand to Morthoe is about two miles and a half. Should the traveller, however, prefer the cliffs, as he will do if he be a fair walker and have a liking for scenery, he will considerably

exceed this distance before he arrive at his walk's end.

To go by the cliffs he must leave the road halfway up the first hill from the beach, and keep under the sea-ward side of Flagstaff hill. On the spur-promontory of this height, looking out upon the sea, are the remains of a smugglers' cave, or hiding place for tobacco, spirits, and other like goods. It was formerly discovered by a revenue cutter which was lying off the coast, owing to a light at its entrance which was incautiously exhibited on a dark and stormy night. Further on is a deep ravine, bisected by a little stream which runs into the sea at a rocky and picturesque strand, called Bennet's Mouth. Westward again is the jutting headland of Bull Point, between which and Morte Point lies Rockham Bay, whose beach is paved with coloured pebbles—many of them being of flint, which formation it is needless to say is not indigenous to the district.

Proceeding up the pretty combe which rises out of Rockham Bay, we quickly arrive at Morthoe—a tiny grey village, on the windiest of hill-tops, with a brief descent thenceforth to the neighbouring stormy sea.

There is an old Devonshire proverb that "Morte is the place which heaven made last and the Devil will take first." One does not quite see that any personage of average taste and experience of the abodes of men would choose it for his own before many other places which might be mentioned—since there are others which are more beautiful, and (taking the reverse view of the question) there are they which are more sombre and desolate.

The weather, to be serious, makes all the difference here, as in North Devon scenery generally. On a fine sunny summer's day Morthoe is as cheerful and bright a place as a man would wish to see: the grey stone houses are picturesque enough with their projecting

porches and quaint gables and many-coloured roofs; and the neighbouring hills are broken in outline and dappled with golden patches of furze and thickets of bright green fern; and the voice of the hidden sea sings a pleasant song in the ears of a landsman, and a stranger, who is ignorant of the wiles of the "cruel angry foam," and knows nothing of the many legends of the terrible "Hill of Death."

Near the summit of the hill stands the village Church, with its low walls and square sturdy tower. I enter, allured by external signs of renovation, and find that the building has been lately restored at the cost of the present Vicar, in memory of his eldest son; and it may be added that it is well restored, and that (as is not always the case) the deed did no discredit to the thought which prompted it. Internally there is a noticeable "waggon-roof" of true Devonshire breed. The ends of the open seats are of black oak, elaborately

and richly carved. Every window is filled in with coloured glass of good quality, and one window in the Chancel, by Hardman, is especially remarkable for its transparency and purity of colour. In the south transept is an ancient tomb, whose cover-stone bears the incised figure of a Priest with a chalice in his hands; and an inscription in Lombardic letters which ran as follows, "Syr Wiliame de Tracey git ici, Deu del alme eyt mercy." This is said to be the memorial of the Sir William de Tracey who was the murderer of Archbishop Beckett; and the grounds of the statement seem to be that the date of the tomb sufficiently corresponds with the date of the Tracey in question, that the Traceys held land in Morthoe in the reign of Henry II., that William of Worcester states that Tracey took shelter in the West of England under the protection of Bartholemew, Bishop of Exeter, and that Risdon writes (*Survey of Devon*, p.

342) "Certain it is he (Sir William de Tracey) withdrew himself hither (to Morthoe), here he spent the remainder of his life, and lieth buried in an aisle of this Church, by him built, under an erected monument with his portraiture engraven on a grey marble stone."

Morte Point and Morte Stone I have already visited and described, so I wend my way westwards, and presently come upon Barricane Bay, a little sea inlet amongst projecting rocks, whose floor is a compact mass of fragments of broken shells, which are evidently washed into their position by a local current, for all the neighbouring bays are quite free from a like deposit (with the exception of one or two patches at low-water mark), and the shells are mostly of deep water sorts, and many of them must come from far. By dint of diligent search I succeed in discovering a few tolerably perfect specimens of shells which are not common in the district. Among them may be

mentioned *Dentalium entalis* and *Dentalium Tarentinum* (the Horn-shells), *Emarginula reticulata* (the Bonnet-shell), *Arca tetragona*, *Tornatella fasciata*, and *Cylichna cylindracea*. The beautiful oceanic "Blue-snail," *Ianthina communis*, is sometimes washed up alive and in large quantities on this coast, and the curious *Vellila limbosa*, on which the *Ianthina* is said to feed during its voyages, is not uncommon during the summer months.

Westward of Barricane is the long shining reach of Woollacombe sands, a good two miles or more in extent, and sharply pent in on either side by the far-stretching promontories of Morte and Baggy Points. On the sands *Natica monilifera*, *Mactra stultorum*, and other like shells are to be found, and the Botanist may hunt up the neighbouring sandhills with much advantage. Coming homewards I find on the cliffs at the east end of the sands the sea-lavender *(Statice spathulata)*, the sea-thrift

(Armeria maritima), the sea-campion *(Silene maritima)*, and samphire *(Crithmum maritimum)*: and climbing the hill I look for a plant of the pretty *Spiranthes autumnalis* (Ladies'-tresses) which is *said* to grow hereabouts, and which I am not successful in finding.

On the whole I have had a hard day's work, but a very pleasant and prolific one, and on the way back it is a welcome sight to see the red sun sinking cloudlessly beyond the unruffled horizon line of the great sea—giving promise, as it does, of fair weather for my morrow's ramble, which will lead me still further on my western journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRAUNTON BURROWS.

The word Burrow is said by Richardson to signify a defended or fortified place: it is a first-cousin of the substantive "burg" signifying originally a fortified tower, and is nearly connected with the verb "to bury," which ought to signify to put into a place of security; the ancestor of the whole family is the Anglo-Saxon "beorgan, borgan, byrgan," to fortify, to protect, to keep safe. Turning over this information in one's mind one discovers a whole tribe of words of like origin: there is "bar" the natural fortress at a river's mouth, "bar" in "Barton" speaking of the secure state of the domestic enclosure in question, "barricade" a defence, "barn" a safe store-

house, "barrack" a military stronghold, "barrow" an ancient burying place, "baron" the strong man of feudal times, "bargain" a ratified and secure compact, "barge" a strong boat used for storing away commodities, "bark" the strength of a tree, "barren" that which is so strongly closed that thenceforth proceeds no issue. These and like cogitations confirm one in one's opinion that after all there are few books so amusing as a dictionary, and suffice at all events to keep one's mind actively employed during the pleasant drive from Ilfracombe to the sunny and sheltered village of Braunton.

Braunton, (S. Brannock's town), is situated at the head of a projecting reach of low land, which is bounded by the sea, the estuary of the united Taw and Torridge, and by the Taw itself, as it winds its way seawards from the neighbouring town of Barnstaple.

From Braunton (where the Church deserves

a visit for the sake of its old oak-carvings, and *not* for the sake of its general arrangements and condition, which are simply disgraceful), we walk down to Santon Court, an ancient "Barton" at the head of the Santon Sands. These stretch for an extent of about three miles from the Court to the tossing surf on Bideford "Bar," and lie between the sea and the Burrows—to which they have doubtlessly given origin. On the sands something may be done in the way of shell-collecting, though the specimens are usually more or less worn and broken by the violence of the sea. I picked up three species of the Razor-shell, two of the Mactra, and the prettily-marked Natica was not uncommon.

The Burrows are a great chaos of wind-strewn sand-hills, covering a track of ground, say of two miles in length, and from half to three-quarters of a mile in breadth, and forming a natural and most necessary barrier to

the further inland incursions of the drifting sands. It is curious to notice the manner in which an impassable barricade is naturally formed out of such shifting and perishable materials as drifting sand and decayed vegetation. A hillock of white ever-moving sand is driven up by the wind—by and bye a long creeping trailer of the tufted sand-grass slides along from a neighbouring hillock, where the process is already in a forward state,—then another underground-root shoots out in a straight line, and another, and another, till at last an interlacing mat of sturdy grass is constructed. Then a few rushes perhaps will spring up, by and bye the sword-like leaves of the lesser Iris, (whose grey-blue blossoms and bright scarlet berries are so great an adornment of this and other like waste places) put in an appearance: then more grass springs up, and more plants burst out into flower: and so, in the end, the whole surface is

covered with luxuriant many-hued vegetation, and a barrier is formed against which the stormy winds may rage in vain.

The Burrows, waste and desolate as they seem to a careless observer, are in truth full of life and of beauty. Countless troops of rabbits hurry in, and out, and round about, in ceaseless motion; overhead the pee-wit screams, the white gulls soar, the lark chants; in the marshy pools the brown-winged water-beetle dives, the water-snails crawl, and swarms of grey winged gnats, and gayer ephemeridæ live out their brief and sunlit hours. Over the jagged leaves and yellow blooms of the Ragwort the pretty pink-winged moth *(Phalæna Jacobæa)* is fluttering his bright colours. And the plants! O, brother botanist, go and visit the Burrows, and thank me for the harvest which I point out as a reward for your happy labours! In this short summer afternoon I gathered more rare and beautiful specimens than I must

here catalogue* : amongst many others were the dull and livid blossom of the Henbane, the blue and crimson Viper's Bugloss, the woolly great Mullein, the pretty pink Centaury, the yellow Chlora, the delicate bog-pimpernel, the dull-purple Hound's-tongue, the square-stemmed S. John's-wort, with which, and divers others not to be here recorded, I filled my vasculum, and intend to enrich my home herbarium.

And the views from those Burrows! Over the white sands, all down the glittering reach of the brimming river my eye is wandering: now it rests on the winding water-wasted curve of white Appledore: now it loses itself amidst the leafy mazes of Northam, nestling among its fair green hills: now it catches the twinkling of the tossing flood on the wreck-sown Bar: now it rests on the far-off cliff outline where Clovelly sleeps in its wooded gorge,

* See the appendix to this chapter.

and great Harty Point keeps lonely watch amid the Atlantic surge.

Yes—whatever you do in North Devonshire, go and "do" the Burrows: and if you pronounce them to be (as they are) "a number of sand-hills in the neighbourhood of a marsh," it will be your own fault, and not mine—nor their's.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XVI.

The following catalogue of the chief plants which are to be found on and about Braunton Burrows, is inserted for the benefit of any botanical reader who may chance to be tempted to pay a visit to that prolific hunting-ground. It is chiefly compiled from the Rev. T. F. Ravenshaw's *Flowering Plants and Ferns of Devonshire*, (Bosworth and Harrison), which may be recommended as the best extant Flora of the district.

Ranunculus reptans.
Glaucium luteum.
Matthiola sinuata. (Santon).
Brassica oleracea.
Cochlearia Danica.
Cakile maritima.
Crambe maritima.
Viola Curtisii.
Saponaria officinalis.
Lychnis vespertina.
,, flos-cuculi.
Sagina nodosa.
Hypericum quadrangulum.
Erodium cicutarium.
Geum rivale.
Rosa spinosissima.
Peplis Portula.
Tamarix Anglica. (Santon).
Montia fontana.
Eryngium maritimum.
Apium graveolens.
Œnanthe Lachenalii.
Erigeron acris.
Galium verum.
Bidens tripartita. (Near Braunton).
Senecio Jacobœa.
Cichorium Intybus. (Near Santon Court).
Chlora perfoliata.
Erythræa pulchella.
Ligustrum vulgare. (Santon)
Convolvolus soldanella. (Santon).
Cynoglossum officinale.
Anchusa sempervirens.
Lycopsis arvensis.
Lithospermum arvensis.
Echium vulgare. (With white or flesh-coloured flowers near Santon Court.)
Solanum Dulcamara.

Atropa Belladonna.
Hyoscyamus niger.
Orobanche minor.
Verbascum Thapsus.
,, Lychnitis. (?)
Eufragia viscosa.
Nepeta Glechoma.
Marrubium vulgare.
Teucrium scordium.
,, ,, var. scordioides.
Anagallis tenella.
Glaux maritima.
Samolus Valerandi.
Statice Limonium.
,, Spathulata. (Santon)
Salsola Kali.
Chenopodium rubrum.
Salicornia herbacea.
Euphorbia Paralias.
,, Portlandica.
Urtica pilulifera. (Santon).
Salix repens, var. fusca.
Listera ovata.
Epipactis palustris.
Iris fœtidissima.
Juncus acutus.
Triglochin maritimum.
Ruppia maritima.
Zanichellia palustris.
Scirpus maritimus.
,, Holoschœnus.
Sclerochloa distans.
Festuca rubra.
Triticum puniceum.

CHAPTER XVII.

BARNSTAPLE AND UMBERLEIGH.

The capital of North Devon is a quiet and clean-looking country-town. Having said which, it does not occur to me that I have any thing else to say on the subject. Barnstaple indeed presents the fewest possible attractions to the ordinary traveller. It boasts a Mayor and Corporation—which is not a remarkable circumstance, and it owns two or three Churches, which are in no ways noteworthy; and it is said by its inhabitants to be an extremely bracing and healthy place of residence, which is not an interesting statement to a man who resides elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the traveller remembers it solely for its being the terminus of that most deliberate of

railways which has brought him from South to North Devon, or will convey him southward with no haste and less speed.

Still, however, the neighbourhood is not without a quiet beauty of its own, and the position of the town on the broad tidal waters of the Taw redeems it from entire dulness and insipidity.

There is an avenue of shady trees by the river's side, called the North Walk, which forms a pleasant lounge in summer weather, and when the tide is at its height the broad expanse of glittering water, the old-fashioned quays and neighbouring buildings, and the wooded hills on the near horizon, combine to form a pretty and noticeable picture.

Having seen all that the town has to show, I take a fishing rod, and the next train to Umberleigh, which is the first station on the up line, and is said to be worth seeing, and to offer fair sport to the fisherman.

The river Taw at Umberleigh certainly *is* worth seeing. It is broad, and full, and musical: there are long rippling "flats," overshadowed by stately avenues of rustling elms: there are weir-barriers above which are still dark pools where the salmon lie lazily, and live like gentlemen, very much at home and at ease, and whence the river falls in spirting silvery cascades, plunging into black hollows, and wandering away in many-whirling rapids, to the cool shade of the lower stream. Then there are endless meadows of green and pleasant grass—a-light on dark spring mornings, with the yellow glare of the "Lent lilies," whose sword-bladed leaves are now waving statelily in the warm summer wind. And there are billowy reaches of deep cool woods, which margin the broad valley on either side. I hear the Woodpecker "seeking her food between bark and bole": the wood-pigeons are crooning to one another in their airy nests:

great white clouds are sailing idly away seaward, and making fleeting islands of light and shade over the drowsy landscape as they fly: and—dearest heart! as the Devonshire women say, there is my return train! Here it comes with a whiz-whirr-rattle:—and now it is gone, and a light cloud of snowy vapour goes skyward to its statelier sisters.

Well: I may as well go on with my fishing, which, on the whole, is not successful, and makes one long for the moorland Barle; and if there be no later train to night it will be no great hardship to stroll back to Barum—and my fishing basket will not be a serious impediment on the march.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIDEFORD AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Many are the places, and sundry the characters, which are not appreciated as they might be, simply "*carent quia vate sacro,*" or, in plainest English, because they have never had the luck to fall in with an efficient Trumpeter. And it is a strange and noticeable circumstance that the notes of such a magical musician linger so potently and persistently about the object of his strain, that one visiting a place which has been celebrated by any master-mind is perforce compelled to dwell more upon the ideal perfections of the past than upon the real loveliness of the present.

The town and country concerning which I

now specially write, is an instance of this truth: it seems impossible to see it with one's own eyes—one sees only "the little white town of Bideford, which slopes upwards from its broad tide-river, paved with yellow sands, and many-arched old bridge, where salmon wait for Autumn floods, toward the pleasant upland on the west. Above the town the hills close in, cushioned with deep oak-woods, through which juts here and there a crag of fern fringed slate; below they lower, and open more and more in softly-rounded knolls and fertile squares of red and green, till they sink into the wide expanse of hazy flats, rich salt marshes, and rolling sand hills, where Torridge joins her sister Taw, and both together flow quietly toward the broad surges of the bar, and the everlasting thunder of the long Atlantic swell."

And by the broadening banks of the silver river, and in the hilly roadways of the quiet

town, one sees even now only the goodly company with which the poet-novelist has peopled the scenes of his Western Epic—the "trusty Saxon serfs, and free Norse rovers with their golden curls, and dark Silurian Britons from the Swansea shore": still, "in the low mullioned window at Burrough," sits "the great Sir Richard, the pride of North Devon, with his cup of Malmsey before him, and the lute to which he has just been singing laid across his knees, while the red western sun streams in upon his high bland forehead, and soft curling locks; ever the same steadfast, god-fearing, chivalrous man, conscious (as far as a soul so healthy can be conscious) of the pride of beauty, and strength, and valour, and wisdom": still "along the little Bideford Churchyard streams all the gentle blood of North Devon—tall and stately men, and fair ladies, worthy of the days when the gentry of England were by due right the leaders of the

people, by personal prowess and beauty, as well as by intellect and education. There is my Lady Countess of Bath, whom Sir Richard Grenvil is escorting, cap in hand; and there are Bassetts from beautiful Umberleigh, and Carys from more beautiful Clovelly, and Fortescues of Wear, and Fortescues of Buckland, and Fortescues from all quarters, and Coles from Slade, and Stukelys from Affton, and St. Legers from Annery, and Coffins from Portledge, and even Copplestones from Eggesford, thirty miles away": still one sees in that quiet country Church-yard the rustling jubilant procession, and hears the braying thundering music of their flutes and hautboys, drums and trumpets, as they do honour to those brave "Devon men, Amyas Leigh of Burrough, John Stavely, Michael Heard, and Jonas Marshall of Bideford, and Thomas Braund of Clovelly, who, first of all British mariners, have sailed round the world with Francis

Drake, and are come hither to give God thanks." Still, too, leaving Bideford town for the fair sea-girt promontory, where Northam sleeps in its summer woods, and grey Appledore—a sea-waif fossilized by the river's brim—lies within sound of the cruel voices of the crested Bar, the traveller, perforce, "goes up between the rich lane-banks, heavy with drooping ferns and honeysuckles: out upon the windy down towards the old Court of Burrough, nestled amid its ring of wind-clipt oaks; through the grey gate-way into the home-close; and then pauses for a moment to look around: first at the wide bay to the westward, with its southern wall of purple cliffs; then at the dim Isle of Lundy far away at sea; then at the cliffs and downs of Morte and Braunton right in front of him; then at the vast yellow sheet of rolling sand hills, and green alluvial plains dotted with red cattle, at his feet, through which the silver estuary

winds onward toward the sea. Beneath him, on his right, the Torridge, like a land-locked lake, sleeps broad and bright between the old park of Tapeley and the charmed rock of the Hubbastone, where seven hundred years ago the Norse-men landed to lay siege to Penwith Castle, a mile away on his left hand; and not three fields away, are the old stones of 'the Bloody Corner,' where the retreating Danes, cut off from their ships, made their last fruitless stand against the Saxon sheriffs and the valiant men of Devon. Within that charmed rock, so Torridge boatmen tell, sleeps now the old Norse Viking in his leaden coffin, with all his fairy treasure and his crown of gold. And past him, far below, upon the soft south-eastern breeze," still, as of old, "the stately ships go sliding out to sea."

I saw this, and no more, of the fair town of Bideford, and its satellite villages, of the floating river and the glittering ocean; for the

song of the " Vates Sacer " rang in my ears and dulled all other influences than those of its own full and perfect harmonies.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLOVELLY.

The road from Bideford to Clovelly is a high and pleasant one, full of those undulations which a wise pedestrian loves, who knows that a long flat is more trying to his muscles than any hills which were ever upheaved, full too of cool tracts of grateful shade, and gemmed as it were with many sudden and shining glimpses of the neighbouring sea.

At the ninth mile-stone we come within sight of "the Hobby" Gate, which will admit us to that most facile and umbrageous of Clovelly approaches. But, under advice, I continue the main road for another hundred yards or so, and thus arrive at Clovelly Dikes, the remains of an old British camp of great

extent, and in marvellously perfect preservation. Having duly inspected this relic of ancient days I repass the Lodge gates and stroll leisurely down the Hobby road, which winds for ever and for ever along the hill-side, through a charming wilderness of stately timber-trees and luxuriant undergrowth. A profusion of flowers and ferns for the botanist, of cuttings and sections of contorted strata for the geologist, of lovely vistas of wood, and glimpses of the neighbouring sea for the artist render this walk attractive in no common degree, and I leave its well-worn track with regret, and find myself under the shadow of full-foliaged oaks in a grass-green lane, which must needs shortly conduct me to Clovelly.

Soon afterwards we came upon a tiny grey Church with a low square tower, which in no way seems markworthy; close by is a well-kept Rectory, and opposite is Clovelly Court with its large and handsome conser-

vatory and gay gardens. These latter look sufficiently tempting, but although I am invited to pay them a visit I venture to decline, and enquire anxiously for the whereabouts of Clovelly village, which is quite invisible, although one seems to have arrived at the very land's end.

"It's just down there, Sir," says the civil woman whom I am questioning.

I followed the direction of her hand, and my eye falls over the wooded cliff, and plunges into the sea.

"Where?" I ask again.

"There!" she replies, pointing seawards with outstretched finger.

"Why, that's Lundy!" I retort rather pettishly, for the weather is hot, and I am not in the humour for practical jokes.

Finally I discover that my informant is in sober earnest; and I apologize, and marvel and proceed. Presently, always among trees,

I come upon the head of a ravine which rushes down into the sea at an angle of about fifty degrees. From its wooded summit, down to the pebbly beach at its base, falls a perfectly unique cataract of cottages descending in an unbroken white straight line. So sheer is the fall that the eaves of every house are on a level with the foundations of its higher and immediate neighbour. The street itself is paved with well-worn boulders from the shore, arranged in a series of irregular stairs, down whose steeps "I slip, I slide," brook-fashion, in increasing bewilderment.

By and bye the double line of cottages coalesce, and all further descent seems impracticable, but on a sudden we discover a dark passage passing through and under an ancient house, well eaved and gabled after the picturesque manner of houses of olden days. So we dive into the tunnel and come out quite unexpectedly upon the quay, where the herring

boats with their red sails and festoons of endless nets are grinding idly against the water-worn stones of the narrow winding gangway. Beyond is a rude and massive pier, which thrusts out its encircling and protecting arm into the rippling waters of the bay: at its extremity I pause and look down upon the sea, which is still below me, and there is a rough ladder so wet and worn and perpendicular that one's breath is positively taken away at the suggestion of the possibility of embarking by means of its dangerous aid. Then I look up at the cascade of white houses and only wonder how I, or any other man, could have accomplished the dizzy descent.

After securing a sketch of the main features of this most unique of villages from an advantageous point of view to the eastward of the Pier, I pass the rest of the day in rambling by the cliffs through the grounds of Clovelly Court, which with kindly liberality are thrown

Hallsmith lith.

CLOVELLY.

open to all comers. Lovely indeed are the wildernesses of virgin grass, and deepest fern, and darkest oak shadows: pleasant are the resting places on the summits of wooded cliffs, where one could rest for ever and absorb the quiet country beauty of the land, and the ever-changing charms of the stately sea. That sullen promontory in the west is Harty Point, haunted by all strong winds and waves on blackest winter nights: and that silver bar of light in front is Lundy, a granite peak, restful ever in the ever-restless sea.

To-morrow we are to visit that Island: blow softly, then, O summer winds, and rest O too-perturbed Ocean!—for I am *not* a good sailor: and my friend and comrade Sharp is essentially a land-animal.

CHAPTER XX.

LUNDY ISLAND.

The morning sun is just begining to tinge the Clovelly woods with saffron : a light breeze has just sprung up from the westward, and the sea, even in my eyes, is decidedly calm. So I engage an idle pilot-boat, which for a small consideration undertakes to convey us to and from Lundy, and to give us a long day upon the Island.

The voyage is brief, and prosperous, and uneventful. Nearing Lundy one begins to see that its height is—at a distance—greatly under-estimated. The cliffs are lofty and precipitous, and at the southern end—towards which we are approaching—are broken, and jagged, and picturesque. The Pilot tells me

that during the breeding season they are alive with sea-birds—which rise in swarms, and soar above in clouds, and plunge into the rolling sea in squadrons: great white herring-gulls, and grey gulls, and black and white guillemots, and crooked-beaked puffins, and pert divers, and weird-looking cormorants, and graceful sea-swallows, and hosts of other denizens of clift and shore abound everywhere in countless numbers and in endless variety. That sea-girt rock to our left—as we run in to the landing-place—is a peninsula at low water, and goes by the name of Lamitor. Further seaward is a minute islet, called Rat Island; which possesses a curious historical interest of its own. For it is one of the few remaining citadels of the *Mus rattus* or aboriginal British Black-rat, which was once lord and master of its clan throughout all England, indeed through all Europe. But as with men, so with rats; the river of progress and success

rises in the east, and the western races are wasted away one by one in the hopeless struggle. Thus out of Asia came the vast armies of the *Mus decumanus*, and with steady and irresistible march advanced towards the setting of the sun: in 1727 they crossed the Volga, in 1730 they crossed the English Channel, and as they steadily marched so they ruthlessly exterminated their predecessors, until at this day not only in Europe, but also in the whole civilized world they are victoriously predominant; whilst the ancient black-coated Britisher is only seen on rare occasions, and is only too glad to have so solitary and secure a retreat as sea-girt Lundy.

We land as it seems suddenly and without usual warning, for our bows are grating upon the beach shingle, whilst there is two fathoms' depth of water under our stern-post: and so one gets to realize that the island is but the peak of a huge submerged mountain, and can

believe that its relatives and congeners are those mighty granitic Torrs which upheave themselves amidst the silence and the cold of the far-off wilds of Dartmoor.

On the summit of the Island is a Trinity Board Lighthouse, which is a marvel of order, and cleanliness, and regularity: there is a higher light which revolves, and a lower light which faces west and is stationary: the light-house-keeper tells the customary stories of benighted birds, which dash against the lanterns during storm and tempest, and are picked up dead when the gale is lulling and the daylight has arrived.

The Island itself is a table-land of grass and furze: it is quite treeless, since no tree could possibly make head against the blasts of salt-laden wind, which sweep across the heart of the wide Atlantic; one wonders at discovering a farm-house in so bleak a situation, and marvels still more at finding that a few annual

crops of wheat and barley, and a plat or two of potatoes contrive to fight out for themselves a stunted and precarious existence.

After a long and laborious ramble round the entire coast of the island, the one thing that most impressed itself upon my mind was the perfect purity and freshness of colour which surrounds one on every side. Surely in few other places does one see such delicate purples and creamy whites as the fragrant Lundy heather exhibits, such pure greens, and yellows, and orange tints as those of the Lundy furze-brakes, and such vivid sparkling whiteness as that of the granite peaks which crop out continually among the varying undulations of richest verdure. The southern extremity of the island is composed of slate, but the remainder is wholly of granite, which now rises into fantastic towers and pinnacles, now subsides into massive weather-beaten, lichen-crested buttresses, now runs out into the still-

vexed ocean in jutting headlands or rounded bluffs, or seeming fragile needle-points of glistening rock, against which even Atlantic tempests rage in vain.

Noon at length approaches, and with it the low water of one of the lowest spring-tides of the year, so without loss of time I betake myself to the slate rocks at the southern end of the Island in search of those "marine monsters" which are so abundant upon the Lundy shores, and for which I know it is useless to look among the granite rocks and boulders of the northern coast.

The speciality of Lundy in the way of Anemones are those "Auroras" of which I have previously written in the notice of our Morte-stone expedition. Here they flourish in vast colonies, double or treble the size of the Morte specimens, and of every colour and variety. Moreover, there are huge "daisies," and patriarchal "trogs," and "thick-skins,"

and gigantic "antheas;" and in fact there are most things which one's heart can desire on such an occasion. Sertularias, Campanularias, and other zoophytes of all kinds, are in full activity in the cool depths of the lower rock-pools; and under the weed-grown boulders live prickly sea-urchins, and sea-cucumbers, and sea-hares, and sea-slugs, and star-fishes galore; and at the margin of the waveless-water lovely Medusæ of the richest blue and orange hues are floating about like clear-set jewels in a Queen's diadem.

And so I speedily fill my cans and bottles, and sitting down to rest after a day of the hardest and pleasantest of work mentally add Lundy Island to the list of those Paradises of the naturalist and artist, which, like most Edens, are not to be enjoyed without honest and persevering exertion.

To me, thus inclining to reverie, enters my ancient mariner, who has mentally hoisted his

Blue Peter, and now with the shortest of black pipes well jammed to larboard, informs me that it is time to ship myself and cargo with as little delay as possible.

So we get aboard, and have a briefest and calmest of homeward passages. Now we run between the pilot-boats which are at their anchorage beyond the pier-head; and Clovelly street looks like a cataract of gold in the light of the setting sun.

Presently I climb the rugged village-stairs to the little Inn,—and so end one of the pleasantest and most prolific of all North-Devon excursions.

CHAPTER XXI.

HARTLAND.

Five miles from Clovelly is Hartland Town —a very quiet street of grey-stone cottages and white-washed houses on a high and windy table-land.

They say it rains a good deal at Hartland: and no doubt it does: for, putting out of the question the obvious fact that the moist air-currents of the gulf-stream are naturally condensed by the first high land which they encounter, it seems evident that it rains at Hartland because there is nothing else for the weather to do there. But one must not murmur, for the Inn is the perfection of a country Inn, and the weather is, on this occasion, faultless.

So, after the earliest of breakfasts, we set out for Hartland Point. We lose ourselves in a labyrinth of ferny lanes which have had no apparent begining, and certainly seems to be without end; and at last, having gone across country in sheer hopelessness and desperation, we are pulled up by an irate farmer in the middle of what he is good enough to call his wheat-field, and whom I unnecessarily exasperate by remarking that the field is sufficiently visible, but that the wheat is very much the reverse.

At length we arrive at the Point, which is the peak of a narrow promontory running far out into the open Atlantic. As we ramble cautiously up the narrowest of paths to its steep and slippery summit, the wind buffets us to its heart's content: when once on the little platform which is the termination of all things, we are suddenly becalmed, for the western sea-breeze strikes against the perpen-

dicular scarp of the promontory, and, by virtue of an obvious mechanical law, rises vertically and leaves the peak to a strange and unexpected quiet.

On either side the view of the coast-line is magnificent, needle points of hard black slate-rock dart out into the white-crested sea: the cliffs are sheer; the beach is a level pavement of vertical strata cut at right-angles by the ceaseless action of the stormy sea, and strewn with chaotic boulders of black slate and white quartz. One can almost hear these huge masses grinding and clanging together as the great Atlantic rollers tower in on stormy winter nights, and nothing living lives where they are omnipotent.

The day is wearing onwards when I am again in the outskirts of Hartland Town, and thence walk rapidly along the hilly road which leads to Hartland Quay. We pass through a lovely valley by the banks of a ferny trout-

stream which glides seaward beneath magnificent oaks. Here is Hartland Abbey, stretching—bar-like—across the vale, a stately and impressive pile of buildings, modernized as it is for modern uses. On the hill above the lofty tapering tower of the Abbey Church soars high into the air.

This Church of S. Nectan would alone repay the trouble of a long and toilsome journey. Thoroughly restored as it is, its great charm is that it has never become thoroughly dilapidated. The stained windows, the reading desk and reredos are of modern care, and the stone Altar and credence-table have been removed from the neighbouring Abbey, but the rest of the Church is as it always was. There is a magnificent carved and coloured oaken screen, with parcloses of like work: there are massive oaken open seats: there is a glorious vista from tower arch to Altar steps. I climb the beautiful tower: high in the wind is a peal of

eight bells, and on the great tenor is the engraven legend "Watch: for ye know not the hour of death." From the lofty summit is a view over valley, and stream, and wood, and sea, which I do not think that I shall easily forget.

Then, for the day is now waning, I walk rapidly down to Hartland Quay: where at the foot of beetling cliffs a curved pier of solid masonry appears to grow out of the solid rock, and forms a seemingly-insecure harbourage for the fishermen's boats in stormy weather.

Beyond again, to the westward, we ramble on over the cliffs whose every turn and angle makes one lament that more time had not been given to this district, which is by far the most striking and picturesque part of the North of Devon.

Here is Catharine Torr, a huge rounded hill cut in two by the encroaching ocean, as by

a giant's sword: and here I am standing once more on the rocky beach at the crowning point of my westward rambles—for here are Milford Waterfalls.

A moorland stream has forced its way through the heart of these iron cliffs: first it makes a sheer leap of a hundred feet down a black rock into a black and whirling pit, now it rushes downwards through the murky ravine with another mighty fall, and still another, and then there is a dark pool at the base of the contorted scarp into which the crested breakers of the spring flood are dashing with a wild and angry roar.

We hasten homewards by the light of the cloudy moon as best we may, and I resolve that my next Devonshire holiday shall be devoted to Hartland country only.

CHAPTER XXII.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

The turret-clock in Hartland Town whirs and jangles out the hour of twelve as I sit in the low wainscotted parlour of the village Inn mentally taking stock of our rambles, which are now come to an end. The night is dark as pitch: every now and then a rifting line of summer lightning glares for an instant and is gone: I open the window as far as I can, and lean out into the warm darkness and meditate. What have we to show for all our work done, and all my money spent?

First, of properties acquired. I have made a very considerable addition to my home herbarium; I have sundry boxes of shells, land and marine; a trayful of moths, and butter-

flies, and beetles; and a hamper of fern-roots, which will flourish and abound even in Bristol smoke, under the cover of an aboriginal Wardian case, which I once constructed out of tea-chests and window-glass. Lastly there are the dried skins of two ancient British rats which Sharp destroyed at Lundy, and which will make him a neat and appropriate collar, to his consequent conceit. Which possessions suggest the thought that North Devonshire surpasses most other English districts in the attractions which it can offer the student of Natural History. For in the first place it is prolific, and in the second place it is various. Its moist though genial atmosphere, its naturally well-drained soil, render it peculiarly adapted for the growth of plants, and its varied natural conformation ensures a variety in its catalogue both of plants and animals. A collector may work on the sea-shore; may dredge in the deep sea; may haunt the banks of salt

marshes, of slow rivers, of rapid streams, and of moorland pools. He may ply his trade on crag and cliff, on the smooth down, under shade of leafy woods, in ferny combes, on furze-clad cleves, on the lonely moor. All these varied habitats are not, as in other districts, widely separated from each other: on the contrary, many of them may be comprehended within the scope of a single day's ramble; and were I asked to recommend a central station to the naturalist in North Devon I should have no hesitation in advising him to take up his abode at Ilfracombe, whence all the above named localities are within a day's reach, and where most of them are close at hand.

Next, of our less tangible acquisitions: I can walk up a Devonshire hill (which always *is* a hill) with any man; I can throw a fly to an inch; I can read and write without that feeling which one used to have, that as soon as one began it was time to leave off. Nerve

and muscle, wind and limb, body and mind, are "in condition." So is Sharp: his coat is glossy, his nose cool and moist, his eyes bright, his temper unimpeachable.

Then as to business—that has not been neglected, for I take home information which will be worth much to my employers, and I trust they will approve of my holiday as much as I do myself.

Early on the morning which follows this midnight summing up, I hire the services of a passing cart to take on my portmanteau as far as Clovelly Dikes, and Sharp and I turn our steps homeward. By and bye the Bude Coach rattles along the dusty road, and we mount. A light summer shower falls, and when the sun shines out again we are standing on Bideford Quay preparing for embarkation.

There is a frothing eddy round the piers of the old Bridge, which shows that the ebb has commenced, and so we steam merrily down

the stream, and soon are plunging in the surf of the bar, and now are again in smooth waters.

From the deck of the easy-going vessel I watch the moving panorama of well known coast line.

There is the black promontory of Baggy Point, and there the shining sands of Woollacombe, and jagged Morthoe, and sunny Lee; and here are the green slopes of the seven Torrs; and there the picturesque outlines of Ilfracombe; and the rolling woods of Lynton: and now the great Foreland is past and gone. So at length we are running up the narrow Avon: and here is old Bristol once again. The evening sun is gilding its lurid smoke atmosphere: what a volume of sound, sound of busy life and anxious work, surges up out of the city depths! It has not the charms of North Devon; but it will have a deeper charm of its own to-night for me!

I betake myself without loss of time to the house of the head partner of our firm, and report my arrival and my work done. I do not care to repeat the many flattering remarks with which the result of my mission was received; but I must add the concluding remark of Mr. Carsford's speech, which was sufficiently startling to me who had never dreamt in my wildest reveries of so fortunate a consummation of my cares.

"You have, Mr. Carnegie," he said, "furthered our interests with an ability and a perseverance for which we can never be too grateful; and we are only too happy to be able to make you some small acknowledgement of your many services. Our head cashier leaves us next month in consequence of his failing health and increasing years: the place is yours, if you will gratify us by accepting its duties."

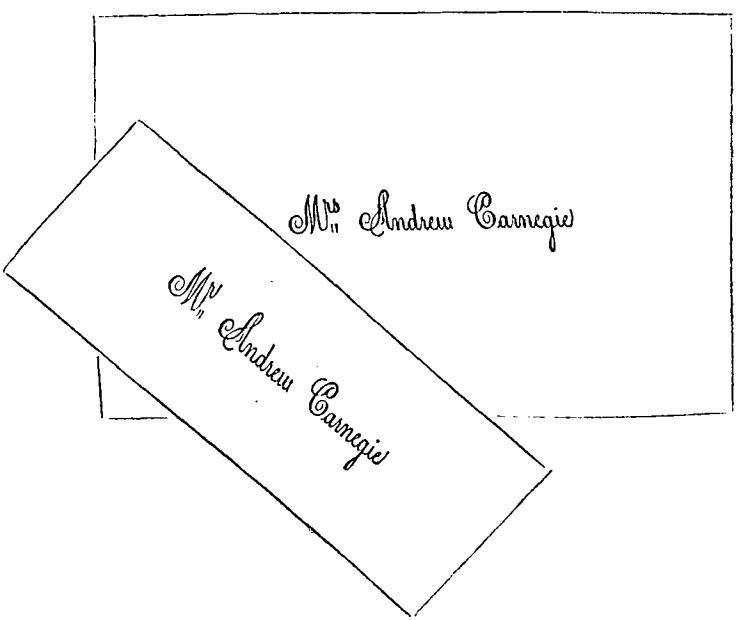
I don't know what answer I made, or whether I stood on my head or my heels for the next five minutes.

Why the salary is——well, I must not tell tales, but it is more than enough, for a married man with a small family and moderate desires, and I am only a bachelor in lodgings.

I rush up all manner of streets and emerge in the neighbourhood of Clifton upon a pretty row of detached cottages, each with its garden in front, and a row of tall limes behind. But I only see one cottage, and hear one voice —singing in the still night a song which I know full well.

I think Caroline is even more bewildered than I am at our sudden accession to fortune and happiness.

Thus prosperously, then, concluded my western journey: and as a friend of mine thinks of printing my rough diary for purposes of his own, may I now be allowed to present my compliments, and request the reader's acceptance of the following practical result of my wanderings in the North of Devon?



THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 84, line 11, *for* Trentishoe *read* Martinhoe.
—— 86, line 2, *for* Martinhoe *read* Trentishoe.
—— 251, line 9, *for* clift *read* cliff.

PRINTED BY J. BANFIELD, ILFRACOMBE.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018